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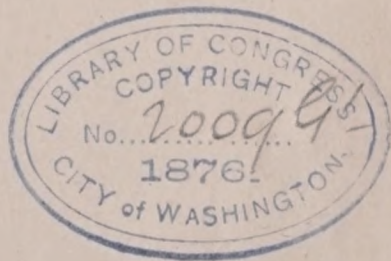
PEARL TREVELYAN;

OR,

VIRTUE REAPS ITS OWN REWARD.

BY

MRS. RHOBY S. WILLIAMS.



QUINCY, ILL.:

THE WHIG BOOK AND JOB PRINTING HOUSE.
1876.

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TO
MRS. P. W. BUTLER,
MY HIGHLY ESTEEMED FRIEND,
THIS VOLUME
IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY

Dedicated.

DELHI, N. Y., Nov. 26, 1875.

PEARL TREVELYAN.

CHAPTER I.

Rare as is true Love, true *Friendship* is still rarer.
—*La Rochefoucauld*.

The sun was sinking behind the western hills, leaving a web of gold interspersed with scarlet and violet hues floating above the horizon, tinging the distant tree-tops with a halo of amber glory, casting golden shafts of light across the lake, and turning the windows of a rural cottage on its banks into magic mirrors of brightness. A slight eminence on which the cottage was situated sloped down with emerald beauty through an avenue of elms, tinged with autumnal tints, to its margin, while bordering it was a small extent of woodland whose trees dipped their coral and amber branches into the sapphire waters beneath, then reared their heads proudly as they stretched far away to the foot of the hills to be seen in the distance also tinged with sunshine. The winds were abroad, too, for, as they came and folded away a snowy curtain from one of the cottage windows, you could see seated there a young man of prepossessing appearance intently engaged in perusing an ancient, musty-looking volume. His form was of medium size, well-proportioned, with a face of exceeding beauty, features regularly outlined, hair dark as the raven's wing brushed carelessly back from a broad intellectual brow, and eyes of a dark changing grey. Their expression was one of child-like innocence, yet portrayed within their depths was a thoughtfulness beyond his years. O, Claude! type of boyish loveliness, may the innocence which now shines forth from your soul never fade out, though years on years of

your life roll by, temptations throng your pathway and dark clouds hover around and obscure the sunlight!

He reads a few moments longer, but, as the shades of twilight fall more thickly round, he lays aside his book, leans far out into the gathering shadows and fixes his gaze intently on the woodland path that winds gracefully along the margin of the lake, as though watching for some one. Soon a merry laugh breaks upon his ear and his eye brightens with a new luster as two girlish forms bound merrily up the avenue accompanied by a noble, honest-faced, favorite dog, who is amusing them with freaks of mischief and his attempts to rid himself of a wreath of gay autumn leaves which his fair companions have woven and twined around his neck. One of these girls he calls sister—the tall, graceful one, with complexion where the lily and the rose are exquisitely blended—finely chiselled features; hair like burnished, gold which drooped low over her classic brow; eyes of a dark, liquid blue; lips full and pouting, red as cherries, which, when parted, revealed a row of teeth which rivalled the gem whose name was her own, for they called her Pearl, sometimes “Pearlof the Lake,” and all that had ever seen her face gazed upon its rare loveliness with delight and admiration, wondering that one so fair should be reared within this rustic vale. Her friend possessed something of beauty, though much darker, with a glow of health to be discerned through the olive shadow on either cheek, hair of chestnut brown, eyes large and expressive, and a haughty curve to the lip which marred the otherwise handsome mouth.

“O, Claude! we have had such a delightful time, wandering among the forest shadows and sailing on the pretty lake. I know you would envy us if you knew how free and happy we have been,” said Lottie, as they came bounding into the room.

“Yes; but he’s always poring over those stupid books. I should think you would weary of them sometimes,” exclaimed Pearl, petulantly.

“But you know they are of great importance to me, or at least may prove so in the future. However, it looks so pleasant out of doors I almost wish I had given up study for a short

time and accepted your invitation. But there are other days coming," said Claude, hopefully, as his beautiful eyes brightened.

"Yes, dear brother," replied Pearl, a little more gently, as though slightly rebuked by his kindness, "but you forget that the cold, dreary winter will soon be with us, and we should make the most of these lovely autumn days.

"Besides," echoed Lottie, "you look solitary sitting here by yourself. It almost banishes my gay spirits when Pearl and I come in so many times and find you all alone."

"But interest in my books tends to drive away solitude, and I am becoming accustomed to being alone. You know it is over two years now since our father died,"—a shade of pain crossing his fine features. "With Pearl's temperament," he continued, "life would indeed become irksome without recreation or amusement. I feel that we owe much to your kind attentions, friend Lottie."

"Yes," said Pearl, fervently; "I know not what my life would have been without your priceless friendship. Shall we ever be parted, I wonder?"

"I hope not, dear Pearl, though I often fear, for papa frequently talks of sending me away to boarding school, though I think that will not be for a year or two yet. Do you know, Pearl, that I can hardly endure the thought? O, I wish you were my own, dear sister! Then, perhaps, we would not have to be parted," exclaimed Lottie, with much emotion, throwing her arms around Pearl's neck and pressing a kiss on her forehead.

"Let us not even think of separation for one brief moment, girls. Enjoy the present and let the future take care of itself. I hope there are yet many happy moments in store for us all," remarked Claude, thoughtfully.

"So we truly hope; but it is growing late and I must go home," said Lottie, rising.

"Will you not remain with us all night," urged Pearl and her brother in unison.

"Thanks. Nothing would give me greater pleasure; but I promised mama I would return.

"Then Pearl and I will row you across the lake, unless you prefer to walk along the forest path."

"No, indeed. I should enjoy a sail much better."

As they emerged from the cottage the full moon was just ascending the twilight heavens, bathing the earth in a flood of silvery light, casting sheets of blue here and there along the avenue, and scattering pearl-drops of beauty over the rippling lake; a few little stars twinkled forth from their golden thrones and were mirrored like diamonds in the waters.

"Oh, isn't this delightful?" exclaimed Pearl. "Just the time for a sail on the lake. Please, get the guitar, Claude. Music and moonlight go so well together. Don't you think so, Lottie?"

"Yes, indeed. The scene would be incomplete without music."

Accordingly Claude did as requested, and in a few moments they were idly rocking in the little pink-hued boat Claude had made for Pearl, and painted on the side in great white letters, the name "Sea-Shell." Their voices rung with merriment, echoing far and near over the rippling waters and through the woodland, as they glided gently on; and with moonlight and fairy-like music from the guitar the hour was crowned with happiness. Lottie's home was but a short distance from the other side, a large, grey, stone structure nearly hidden by trees. So after alighting on the shore they walked to the massive gateway, bade their friend an affectionate good night and again turned homeward. They did not linger now, but rowed quickly to the little boat-house Claude had constructed with his own skillful hands, then walked up the avenue and entered the cottage.

"Brother," said Pearl, as they lighted a lamp and sat down together, "it seems to me I should always be happy if I could be with Lottie; she draws my thoughts so effectually from our one great sorrow. When we enter here, you and I alone, it reminds me so forcibly of him we have lost that a sadness will steal over me. There is an unmistakable gloom over our home. Do you not find it so?"

"Yes, Pearl, dear, in a great measure; but we must trust in God. He doeth all things well. He doth not afflict willingly.

He is our strength, our hope, our sure support through every trial and temptation. Hope for better days. Our youth should not be thus early blighted. You are still younger than myself. Cling to me. I will ever be a friend and brother to you, darling, whatever may betide. I have something to say. Perhaps you have never thought of it; but do not trust too much in Lottie. You know her station is far above ours. Wealth and affluence are hers. Time may bring a change. She is not yet old enough to fully realize the difference."

"But she is so good and noble, it seems impossible. I will not think of it. She will ever be the same true friend and sister she is now, believe me, Claude."

"I will endeavor to do so; but true nobility of soul will alone keep her from changing toward us. We can never move in the same circle of wealth and fashion, and many, many will be the temptations that beset her pathway to forsake her old friends. I truly hope otherwise; but I have heard our father say that true friendship is a rare and precious gem, hardly to be found in this cold and selfish world. There, I have made you weep. Forgive me! Perhaps my fears are groundless. Let me get the Bible and read some of our Savior's promises ere we retire. Perhaps they will give you comfort."

After having gone through the accustomed routine of family worship, they bade each other good-night and retired to their respective apartments, which were both small and cosy, and furnished as near alike as possible, with fleecy muslin curtains, somewhat faded ingrain carpet, a bed covered with a snowy counterpane, a dressing table, small mirror, two chairs and a few pictures. The windows of Claude's apartment opened towards the forest, while those of Pearl's commanded a fair view of the lake. She was weary to-night, and in a few brief moments was sweetly slumbering upon her snowy couch wrapped in the October moonlight. Not so with Claude. Their conversation had awakened a train of thought in which he felt he must indulge; so he sat down by the window, and, placing his head upon his hand, took a retrospective view of the past. He could trace their family history far back, although so young. Three

years ago this very month—how well he remembered it—his father had summoned him into the little room he called his library, at the west end of the house, and told him he had something to say of importance. The very words came to Claude to-night with remarkable freshness, as he sat alone:

“My son, I am an invalid. This disease, sooner or later, will take me away. I only await God’s own good time, and I feel that you must know something of your parents’ past history. I was born and reared in wealth and affluence. There were only two children of us, my brother and myself; consequently everything was ours that money could procure; and you know, my son, that comprises nearly all this earth affords—luxury at home and abroad, society, summer friends, and, lastly, and what I prize above everything earthly, knowledge. I liked books, and I thirsted for an education. My brother, unlike me, did not care for it. My parents gave me the advantages I desired, and I became a physician. I established practice in a neighboring town where I met with remarkable success. All glided smoothly for about two years. Then my mother died. We deeply mourned her loss, for we almost idolized her; but soon after—I never shall forget the night, one of the worst of a cold and dreary winter—I was called to see a patient about two miles away. I felt almost determined not to go. I had only just returned from a ride, and was weary and jaded out; but I never regretted going. For, as I entered the sick room, a short time after, I thought I had never seen a face of such extreme beauty, a face almost spiritual in its loveliness. The disease proved to be fever in its worst form. I felt certain from the first she would not live. Something whispered it. But, oh! how faithfully I labored to save her life. I dreamed of her night and day and put forth my best efforts, but all was of no avail. She died, and that day found me a changed man. I felt I had passed through years of experience in those few short days.

“Months passed away, yet I could not forget that face. One fine day, just as the sun was setting, I wandered to the grave beneath the willow where she so sweetly reposed, and where the bright flowers were blooming and the myrtle twined its

waxen tendrils round the foot of the shining white marble which bore her name. I read the inscription over and over. I lingered awhile beside the grave, and when I arose to depart an inexpressible weight of grief burdened my heart. I felt, as I had never felt before—weary, weary of life. All the future looked a mere blank. As I walked musingly along, directing my steps toward the entrance of the cemetery, suddenly I saw the figure of a female, robed in deep mourning, slowly approaching. Her vail was partially thrown back, and as she came near and the light fell upon her with more intensity, I thought I should have fallen, for there before me was the perfect counterpart of her whose resting place I had just visited. The same perfect features, the same beautiful eyes and midnight hair, and with nearly the same angelic expression. She passed on. I turned and watched her with a strange wonderment. Who could it be? She walked on and on along the winding paths till she came to the very spot I had left—*her* grave. There she knelt down and I almost fancied I could hear her sobs and moans of agony from where I stood. Oh! how I longed to share her grief; but it was not my privilege to intrude. So I walked slowly toward home wondering who this fair stranger could be. All at once it came to my mind that I had heard the deceased had a sister traveling with an aunt who was in ill health. This must be that sister returned to see all that remained of the one she had loved so fondly—a low myrtle-and-flower-leaved grave. I reached home like one in a dream. That face again haunted me. I could not rest; but fate was truly kind, for, a short time after, we met again at the house of the friend where I had first seen that face on that memorable night. I was called there to administer to a sick child.

“She proved to be her sister, as I had conjectured, and learning that I was her physician during her last illness, rather forwarded our acquaintance by her own modest advances. She would sit with me many times weeping and conversing of the lovely character of her dead sister, of the many happy moments enjoyed in her society, of her desolate life, now an orphan without brother or sister; while I, in return, would tell her all I

knew of her last illness and death, and give her my heart-felt sympathy. Thus our acquaintance ripened into intimacy, and from intimacy into love, until she had promised to become my wife. I never shall forget my father's wrath—for he was a man of strong passions—when I told him of our betrothal. Miss Ada Tremain, the belle of the town where I practiced, was the one he had singled out for me. She was a beauty, wealthy and accomplished, and he said I could as well make a brilliant match as to marry a poor obscure girl like the one I had chosen. I told him all he could say would not draw me from my purpose. He turned pale with rage, his eyes glared with passion, and, pointing to the door, he said, 'Go! From this day I disinherit you forever.' I never saw my father's face again.

"We were married, she and I, and embarked for Europe, where we stayed for more than two years, when one day a letter was brought me from my brother, stating the news of my father's death. A great railway disaster had occurred, and he was among the number killed. We immediately returned to America; shortly after which I learned that my father had executed his will and bequeathed to my brother all his immense wealth. He had done so in wrath; but he was dead now and it could not be recalled. I confess I felt very sad and discouraged for a long time, but your birth, which occurred two or three years subsequent, again gave me renewed energy. Then a few years passed away of uninterrupted happiness to us. And now, Claude, I am going to reveal to you that which may cause you pain and sorrow; but you must know it, my son. Pearl is not your sister."

Claude turned deathly pale as he sat silently listening. It seemed that his blood had turned to ice.

"Would that she were," his father continued, "for the fear of sometime having to give her up to others has been the great burden of my life. One morning, before the break of day, the door-bell spitefully rang, and, supposing it some one who wanted my professional assistance, I hurried to the door. Every trace of the person, whoever it was, had vanished; but before me, wrapped in snowy flannel, and lying in a basket, was the

sweetest little infant—except one—I had ever seen. The lamp-light fell upon its alabaster brow; its laughing eyes shone like two great round beads, while its little waxen arms were held out imploringly towards me. I raised the basket and carried it to your mother. We had just lost a sweet little girl, only a few days old, and her heart warmed so towards its purity and helplessness that we concluded to give it the home and tender care our own would have received, until some one should assert a higher claim. We had been deprived of our former nurse a day or two before, and the next day I procured another. Therefore, no person knows otherwise than that she is our own. No clue has ever been obtained. A golden cross, on which was engraved the name “Pearl,” hung suspended by a chain about her neck; and that, with the few clothes she wore, has been carefully preserved, in the rose-wood box, once your mother’s. Pearl does not know of this, and believes even now that I am her father. I could never tell her, and now, my boy, I leave the secret with you to reveal at your pleasure when I am gone; but let me die before her love is lessened, while the name father is still upon her lips.

“In about one year your mother died. Then dark, oh, how dark! were the days that followed. You know Ellen, the nurse, the old gardener’s wife? She was with us then, and I induced her to remain. Thus she became an inmate of our family. I lost all courage, all ambition, after your mother’s death. All that stimulated me to live was my children. But I do not wish to linger over those dark, stormy days. Oh, my son! may you never have to endure in the future what your father has in the past! My health began to fail me, and disposing of our village residence, we removed to our pleasant cottage home. I then employed Anthony Moore, whom Ellen afterwards married, to cultivate our small piece of land, and raise fruit and vegetables, which we disposed of readily in the neighboring city. This, with the small property I had myself accumulated, has served to maintain us during these few past years.

“After my death, Claude, I think it will be advisable for you to continue the same method of subsistence; and it is my earnest

request, that if ever an opportunity offers, you may become a physician, and carry out, by the knowledge you gain, that which your poor, feeble father has begun; and your faithful practice of its truthful precepts will not only further your own individual interests, but become an ally to the further aid and progress of humanity."

All this sad story, every incident narrated by his father, passed as plainly through his mind to-night, while he sat enshrouded in the cold, pale rays of moonlight, his dark eyes penetrating into the deep recesses of the forest, as though he had heard it but yesterday. He thought, too, of his life since that time. In about a year his father died, leaving him to battle alone with the hardships and disappointments of life. The old gardener and his wife were indeed kind friends to them; but the noble old woman's services had been disposed of for a time, as Pearl had now attained that age and experience requisite to attend to the duties of the household, and the old couple now lived in a little house near the lake-shore.

Claude could not recollect much about his mother, being so young when she died; but there was a portrait in the library of a very beautiful woman, with features of the Grecian type, dark eyes, and dusky folds of midnight hair wound in a massive coil at the back. It was a picture of his mother, which had been painted by an artist during their sojourn in Europe, and presented to his father as a token of sincere regard. He had sat for hours gazing upon it, more particularly since his father's death, and wondered what her life had been to those around her. One of love and kindness, he thought, for her countenance was expressive of a mild and amiable disposition. Oh, if she could have been spared! How happy they might have been! And besides, he had no rightful claim on Pearl. He could hardly believe she was not his sister. It had grown to be a burden to him as it was to his father. How could he ever tell her! Why couldn't the days have gone on and on, and the years, and the knowledge never come to him? She was lonely now, and sometimes felt almost friendless, since their father died, and this would nearly kill her. So he would keep it until some more favorable

opportunity offered to reveal the startling truth. Thus his thoughts ran. The time had passed away so rapidly, as he sat dreaming, that he was startled when the sound of the old clock below tolled a late hour, and rising, he sought his couch to procure a little sleep before daybreak.

CHAPTER II.

When griping Grief the Heart doth wound,
And doleful Dumps the Mind oppress,
Then Music, with her silver sound,
With speedy help doth lend redress.
—*Shakespeare.*

It was New Year's eve. The stately halls of Stanwick Manse, Lottie's home, were ablaze with light. A party of merry sleigh-riders had come down from the city as guests, and Lottie, assisted by her friend, Pearl, was there to receive them as they came with rosy cheeks and silvery laughter, into the flood of dazzling light which fell from the blazing chandeliers. Numerous invitations had been issued, and the magnificent rooms were soon sufficiently crowded. But was our friend Claude there? Yes: within the crimson-draperyed recess of the bay-window he sat alone, looking out upon the night and the cold glitter of the stars twinkling in the boundless ether. Nothing of the scene by which he was surrounded seemed to attract his attention. There was a kind of bewildering enchantment about all this splendor and gayety, but he was too sad to-night to join in their mirth, and he almost wished himself in their own little library at home in front of the cheerful, blazing fire. He was sure he would be happier there. But if he could sit even here in quietness! Oh, dear! He hoped no one would molest him for awhile; but he was doomed to disappointment, for just at

that moment Lottie, with a tall, stylish looking girl, entered the room, and, crossing over to the piano, the former said:

“There is Claude Trevelyan, Cecilia, over yonder in the bay-window. He is so strange and quiet; but you will say he is charming, I know. I will go and speak to him.”

Accordingly, a moment after, Claude was startled by a foot-step close beside him, and raising his dark eyes, saw Lottie, the embodiment of loveliness. He thought he had never seen her look so perfectly bewitching as she stood there before him in a dress of soft crimson, which set off her dark beauty to its fullest capacity; and she spoke so tenderly and pleadingly, too, as she said:

“Come, Claude; I want to present you to Miss Cecilia Colton, the handsome city belle. She’s a splendid pianist, and we would like you to accompany her on the guitar. Now, do oblige me this once,” she added coaxingly, observing his hesitation.

“I had much rather be excused, Miss Lottie; but I suppose I shall be obliged to submit, as it would be the next thing to impossible to resist you.”

“Thank you. You are just as good as I thought you were,” and taking his arm she led him triumphantly forth from the curtained embrasure, presented him to Miss Colton and several others who stood near; then bounded away and soon came tripping back with the guitar, which with an air of mock courtesy, she placed in Claude’s hand.

After executing a few instrumental pieces, which met with applause from the company, there followed a quartette, in which Pearl and Lottie participated; and then a solo from Claude, accompanied by the guitar, which commanded the entire attention and admiration of all.

“What a sweet tenor voice!” was echoed from one to another around the room.

“Yes; and besides, he’s so handsome—perfectly brilliant, when he smiles—and with it all, so unassuming,” said one of the city fashionables to Lottie’s mama. “Permit me to ask who that sweet looking young lady is, with the splendid hair and eyes, sitting by your daughter’s side?”

“Oh, that is Pearl Trevelyan, the young gentleman’s sister.”

“I should hardly have thought it, they are so dissimilar. They are friends of your daughter’s, I conclude?”

“Yes. School friends.”

Then the music ceased and other amusements were proposed; after which came refreshments, and, altogether, the evening progressed very pleasantly, Claude joining in the general mirth with considerable zest, for him, while Pearl’s eyes sparkled with joy, and her voice rang with merriment. Claude had not seen her so perfectly happy and free from care in many a long month.

“Pearl, dear, I wish to tell you something. Come out into the conservatory with me. The heat is getting oppressive here. I want a breath of pure air,” said Lottie, putting her arm around Pearl.

“Just what I was wishing for, Miss Lottie,” said Claude, who, sitting close by, heard the last uttered words, and stepping between them, he gallantly escorted the two laughing girls into the green retreat.

The murmuring of the fountain; the soft perfume of the flowers, and the gorgeous colors of the tropical plants nestled in among the verdant foliage, like great carbuncles, amethysts and rubies set in emeralds; the gilded cages, whose little prisoners had ceased their gentle warbling till the dawn of morning, all served to make this place a perfect Eden of beauty and delight.

“Lottie, dear, what a charming home you have! It seems that nothing is lacking to make it complete. You must be very happy amid such lovely surroundings.”

“Yes, Pearl, I am, in a great measure; but even in a home like this there is not always joy and pleasure. Wealth and luxury alone do not bring lasting happiness;—but I was going to tell you something; and, as Claude is with us, I will give him my confidence, also. Papa has decided to send me away to school next term.”

Quick as thought a shade of sorrow crossed Pearl’s hitherto happy face, and, covering it with her hands, she burst into tears. “Oh, Lottie! Lottie! Then we shall never enjoy such gladsome hours again. They are all gone forever. You will be at home

only during vacations, and I shall scarcely see you. What am I to do?"

Claude turned to soothe her, but Lottie was weeping, too; so he walked away by himself, leaving them alone in their grief.

But had it driven no pang of sorrow to his heart? Ah, yes! He thought with regret her words had brought home to him the conviction that Lottie, the heiress of all this wealth, the pet and pride of this home of pomp and elegance, was even more to him than friend. But he would never mention it; no, not even to Pearl. He did not know it himself before, and the knowledge alarmed him now. How dare he love her—he who had nothing but worth and respectability on which to build his future; and these he knew were little, compared with wealth. This he had not and probably should never have. He would quell such an absurd passion for one who could never reciprocate it, and it should never take a deeper hold on his heart than it had already. There should be more restraint in his manner towards her in the future, and she should never even dream of the passion she had awakened in his breast. But he must seek them. Perhaps, ere this, they had joined the company. Ah, no! There they were by the fountain, and before they saw him these words fell upon his ear from the trembling lips of his sister.

"Pardon me, Lottie, dear; but I have thought sometimes that perhaps this change in your life may cause you, in some manner, to forget your humble friends of Moss Cottage;" and then he heard distinctly the words of Lottie, as she fervently replied:

"No, Pearl: No, never, *never*, Pearl. I shall always be the same to you."

How often these words recurred to him in after years, and caused him almost to doubt the existence of true friendship.

"Oh! There he is, now, Pearl," said Lottie, her face brightening up as she saw Claude advancing. But his brow was a shade paler, she thought, and there was a pensive sadness on his countenance she had never detected before. Could it be that her words had caused this change? Oh, no! It was impossible. She would put the mere idea of such a thing from her mind. He, so noble and dignified, so far above her—the departure of

one so unimportant as herself would not affect him in the least, except it might be on his sister's account. But she could not help thinking as he approached, that she wished it might be so. He was more to her, and had been from their childhood, than any one else she had ever met; but there had been no exhibition on his part of more than ordinary friendship. Accordingly, with a sigh and an extra effort to appear cheerful, she advanced with Pearl to meet Claude, and each taking his arm, walked silently back to the drawing-room, respectively engaged in their own sad thoughts.

The evening was nearly spent, and the guests soon began to take their leave. Among the first to depart were Claude and Pearl. He knew, if they lingered, upon what the conversation would naturally turn, and he did not feel prepared for it to-night. So making some excuse, he hastened their departure.

Lottie had noticed the marked coldness of his manner towards her during the latter part of the evening, and as she laid her head upon her pillow that night she wept bitter tears of regret. It was the first real cloud of sorrow that had ever darkened her young life. Her pathway had hitherto been strewn with flowers and flooded with golden sunlight, like one sunny summer's day. Ah! she realized the words she had uttered, when Pearl spoke of her beautiful home, more than she ever did before: "Wealth alone brings not happiness." They had been uttered almost thoughtlessly. She hardly knew what they meant; but now, for the first time, truly she felt their power. Why did he assume that strange indifference? He had never done so before. Had she offended him? No; she could not think of a single instance. He had hitherto been to her like a friend—sometimes she almost fancied like a brother; but now a "change had come o'er the spirit of her dream," and occupied with these puzzling thoughts, weary and sad at heart, she fell into a troubled slumber.

The next morning dawned clear and bright. The sun shone with dazzling splendor over the snow-incrusted earth, giving to the ice-bound lake the aspect of a vast mirror. Claude arose early, and after going through the preliminaries of a hasty toilet preparatory to commencing the day's duties, he descended to

the neat little kitchen, whose every appointment spoke so plainly of Pearl's handiwork, and, lighting a fire on the hearth, took his hat and sauntered slowly down to the gardener's little home. It was something he seldom did so early in the morning, but the previous evening's perplexities had not wholly passed from his mind, and he thought perhaps a walk in the bracing atmosphere might give him that vigor which a sleepless night had failed to bring, and help in a measure to drive away his sadness. Before he had proceeded far, however, he found that he had a companion, for whether welcome or otherwise, old pet Rover was on hand, wagging his white-tipped tail and looking up with his great, pleading, brown eyes, as much as to say, "Can I go?" Claude patted him on the head, gave him a kind word, and Rover, with a satisfied air, went bounding and skipping along in front of his young friend.

"Good morning, Masther Claude. And what has brought ye out so early?" said the gardener's kind voice, as Claude opened the door and stepped in without ceremony, the dog bounding along before him. "Sit up by the cheery fire here. I know ye must be cold. My good woman will be out soon, and sure she'll be glad to see your bright boyish face once more."

"I can linger only a few moments, friend Anthony. I merely came out for a little walk, thinking I might feel refreshed. This keen, cold air has proved really invigorating. I feel the effect of it already; but here is Ellen. Good morning, kind friend. How do I find you this freezing weather?"

"O, nearly frozen up, to be sure," she replied, rubbing her hands together briskly; "but how is yerself and Misthress Pearl?"

"Quite well, thank you; only a little fatigued—the natural result of last evening's entertainment."

"Oh, yes. Surely, surely, Masther Claude, yerself and Missy Pearl were invited over to the grand party at the Manse. It's rather an uncommon thing, such a pompous affair in this locality. Howsumever, I'spect they're rich enough to carry it out. Miss Lottie is getting near about a young woman, an' I'spose they're trying to bring her into society."

"Perhaps you are right, Ellen; but pardon me if I ask why

you have not been to see us oftener of late? Sister gets very lonely sometimes," said Claude, anxious to change the unpleasant subject to something more agreeable.

"Bless you, dear boy, I have been near sick with the rheumatiz, and have been afraid to venture for fear of taking cold; but I am feeling better now—quite strong and hearty again."

"By the way, Masther Claude," interrupted Anthony, "I am going to take Dobbin and go down to the city to-day, if ye have no objections. Have ye any errand ye wish done?"

"Nothing, except to bring the mail and purchase a few groceries, of which I will give you a list," and suiting the action to the word, he tore a slip from his memorandum book and noted down the articles. Then handing it to the gardener, he bade them a kind good morning and started homeward, his faithful dog bounding merily along by his side.

The warm breakfast was steaming on the table when he entered. The fragrant beverage of coffee filled the air with aromatic vapor; the house seemed bright and cheerful, and Pearl looked happy and contented as she moved about in her neat chintz morning dress, preparing their sumptuous meal. At almost any other time all this would have had a cheering effect on Claude; but this morning he was sad and dejected, and everything looked dark and discouraging. He had forgotten for a time, we fear, the injunction frequently offered by himself to Pearl, to "trust in their Heavenly Father."

"Dear brother, you look unhappy this morning. Pray, tell me what is the cause. Anything unusual?"

"No, Pearl. I only feel disheartened. I have been thinking during my walk that I shall have to abandon my favorite project of becoming a physician. It is true, I have studied a great deal and read many of our father's medicinal works, and although I have learned much that will be of value to me, yet they are quite ancient, you know, and I should be obliged to study nearly if not quite as long with one of our modern physicians as though I had never looked within their pages. Our means are limited. Therefore I shall have to resign that which I most wish for, teach myself submission and struggle through the world with

nothing more than an ordinary education. Oh, Pearl! It is very hard to bear," and he turned away to conceal the tears that would come in spite of all his efforts to restrain them.

"I am very sorry, dear brother; but hope for the best. Trust in our loving Saviour. He alone can deliver us from our trouble. You remember where He says, 'I will be a father to the fatherless and the widow's God.' Do you think He will forsake His children? Will He not verify His promise to us?"

"Thank you, dear sister, for your timely counsel. I fear I had indeed forgotten for a time His loving kindness to us during all these years. I was looking on the dark side of life; but I will try to place myself in the light again where I shall enjoy His smiles and blessings evermore. What should I do without your invaluable counsel and affection. Your love, dear Pearl, shall ever be the guiding star to light me through the dark vistas of this cold and selfish world, to the haven beyond where all is peace and rest."

"I hope, my brother, as bound by a sister's duty, ever to shed that hallowed influence around your pathway, which, though miles intervene between us, may still draw you with the golden chord of love and virtue from the path of vice and immorality to that of duty."

Thus the morning meal passed; after which came family devotion, and the two knelt there, side by side, pleading earnestly with words of faith and hope, that Our Father would guide and protect them through the dark years of the future. The sun creeping in through the snowy curtains cast a halo of glory around their youthful forms, like a blessing sent from God, making a beautiful picture of purity and innocence.

It was after the dinner hour. Claude was sitting by the window, book in hand, Pearl engaged about the household duties, and old Rover lying by the fire basking in its warmth, when the old gardener drove up on his way from the city, and opening the door, called out, "Here are the groceries, Masther Claude, and a letter for ye in the bargain."

"You are very kind, I'm sure. Come in by the fire," said Claude.

"No, thank ye. My good woman will be waiting, and I must away."

Accordingly he was soon on the road to the cottage, Dobbin flying at his swiftest speed.

Claude was rather surprised to receive a letter to-day, and besides the hand-writing was strange. Who would have written he could not divine, and with expectation, of what, he hardly knew—perhaps some bad tidings from a friend—he tore it open, and, unfolding the sheet he read:

Find enclosed bills to the amount of three hundred dollars.

FROM A FRIEND.

Not another word did the paper contain, and the moneyed messengers flitted down, one by one, from Claude's hand to the carpet at his feet. He was struck dumb with amazement; and Pearl, just then coming in from the adjoining apartment, paused and gazed with wonder as she saw him stoop and pick them up.

"Sister, see what has come to us. Who could have sent it? Is the hand-writing familiar to you?" said our hero, recovering himself and placing the note in Pearl's hand.

"No, it is not. I have no idea; but God has put it into the heart of some kind friend to send it to us. Did I not say He would never forsake His children? Let us never again forget to put our whole trust in Him."

"You are right, sister. He has indeed prompted some kind friend, but I can hardly conjecture who, unless it be our uncle, father's brother; and, as there has been no intercourse between our families for years, it is very improbable."

"Yet I can think of no other source from which it might have come. However, I hope this timely gift has helped to disperse some of the dark clouds of the morning, has it not?" queried Pearl, sympathizingly.

"It certainly has, and now I can again entertain hopes of carrying out my favorite designs. I shall study at home the remainder of the winter, during which time I shall endeavor to procure a situation as student with some able physician, perhaps our father's friend and counsellor, Dr. Norton, of the neighboring city. Two or three years more of common school educa-

tion, Pearl, and then we will hope that something may offer to enable you to attend a higher institution of learning."

"Never think of me, brother. Education is far more essential in your position. Although I highly appreciate knowledge, yet, for your sake, I will cheerfully relinquish every hope of obtaining it."

Thus the life of the two passed on, each one striving to lighten the other's burdens by personal sacrifices; each one holding out to the other the lamp of faith and hope, to guide them along the shadowed life-path, and weaving around their hearts a golden glory of love and affection that should never grow dim.

Claude was happy in the hope of future success, and numberless gilded air-castles did he build of coming greatness, and even wealth, as he sat in front of the blazing fire in the library, many an evening, long after Pearl was slumbering in her cozy little nest above. But she was not so happy; for how often the thought would come of the lonely hours when Claude would be from home. Everything looked desolate at the mere imagination of it. Then Lottie would be gone, too. It seemed hardly endurable; but she would not speak of it to Claude for it would mar his happiness, and he seemed so joyous now and so full of bright prospects, she would endure it in silence. He should not know that all the pleasure which might have been enjoyed in his presence these long winter months, was overshadowed by a cloud which his coming absence would bring. Anthony and Ellen should come and dwell in Moss Cottage again. She would attend school, but oh! there would be so many hours of loneliness without Claude and her favorite Lottie. But her trust should be in God, and, perchance, happy days might come to her in a way of which she little dreamed.

So the winter months passed away—on wings, as Pearl thought. To Claude they disappeared with slower tread. He was anxious to commence his studies, yet he could not say the time was devoid of pleasure. Quite the reverse, indeed, for when not prevented by the inclemency of the weather, Lottie, with her bright smiles and cheering words, would often drop in to help while away the hours which passed very pleasantly,

filled with profitable conversation. Sometimes Claude read aloud in his clear, rich voice, while the girls, intently listening, executed, perhaps, some piece of needle-work. Then with his guitar and low, passionate voice, he would breathe forth soft, sweet, bewildering strains, casting a mystic spell over their senses, prompting them sometimes to join in the music.

But these hours of pleasure were not wholly unmingled with pain. There was surely not that freedom of intercourse which once existed between Claude and Lottie. His demeanor toward her was marked with a coldness and reserve which, though slight, made itself manifest, cast a chill over her young heart, and repelled the natural freedom of her manner toward him. She felt, indeed, that her apprehensions on that New Year's night were not ungrounded. Something must have then occurred, she knew not what, to occasion this change in one who had ever been so true and faithful a friend. It caused many a cloud to obscure the sunshine for a time; but she strove to overcome it and appear as formerly in his presence. Still, with all her exertion, this did not evade the quick perceptions of Pearl. She realized that there was a link broken somewhere in the chain of friendship between Lottie and her brother; but why it should be so she was unaware. It caused her many painful moments. Certainly Lottie was the same to her, but there was a look of grave anxiety which, in moments of repose, would settle upon her countenance, showing that all was not happiness within.

Claude alone knew what had occasioned this strange alteration, and he it was who suffered most; so he sat hour after hour in the presence of her he loved, trying to suppress the passion that welled up in his breast, and forever watching himself with the strictest care, lest by some word or act he might betray his emotion. He experienced a sort of inexplicable delight in her society, yet, underneath all, there coursed a current of sad regret. But the spring-time would soon be here. Perhaps separation, change of scene and new associations would, in a manner, bring forgetfulness. He would console himself, at least, with such thoughts.

It was a day in early spring-time when Claude, his heart beating high with hope, ascended the huge granite steps in front of Dr. Norton's mansion, and with trembling hand rang the bell. A moment passed, a porter opened the ponderous door and, on replying in the affirmative to Claude's question whether Dr. Norton was within, ushered him into the adjoining room to wait that gentleman's entrance. A few moments elapsed ere the doctor appeared, which gave Claude time to put forth every effort to collect himself and resume his wonted calmness; but as he took in a quick survey of the spacious apartment, which was furnished with princely magnificence, his heart sank within him. He had never been in the midst of such splendor before, and he thought how doubtful it was whether a man who reveled in such ostensible wealth and luxury as Dr. Norton, would take a poor, unpromising boy like him for a student. How could he have been so presumptuous as to entertain such a thought! Even now he would withdraw if he could do so with consistency. But there was one thought that comforted him. He had been his *father's* friend. Perhaps, for that reason, he would pardon his rashness and look upon him kindly. He had not seen the Doctor for several years, the latter being absent in Europe at the time of his father's death, and he could scarcely remember him; but a silent prayer went up to God for His guidance and direction, and in a moment more the doors opened and admitted the Doctor. His looks were not of the most prepossessing kind, owing to the irregularity of his features; but there was an engaging air about him. His form was tall and commanding, his countenance jolly, and his eyes beamed with good humor and intelligence. He scanned Claude with a curious glance. Then with a gleam of recognition he said pleasantly:

"Am I mistaken, or is this Claude Trevelyan, the son of my old and esteemed friend?" at the same time proffering his hand, with which he gave Claude's a hearty shake.

"You are right, sir," said our hero, reassured by the gentleman's affable manner. "I am the son of that friend, and have often heard my dear father speak of you with great affection and respect."

"I am glad to see you, my boy. You resemble him so strongly that I can almost fancy I am once more in the presence of my much loved, early friend," said the Doctor with emotion, as old memories crowded thick and fast upon his mind. "And now be seated in this easy chair and tell me of his decease. I am anxious to know, for I am sorry to say I was absent at the time, in Europe, and only returned a few months since," he continued, drawing a luxurious velvet-cushioned chair towards him which Claude accepted, and then, with much feeling, narrated, as nearly as possible, the circumstances of his father's death and much of the last two years of his life, not omitting the request that he should become a physician if it were possible.

The Doctor listened, much affected, and as the last words fell upon his ear, he said: "And now, my boy, I think I can readily divine the errand which has given me the honor and pleasure of this visit. You wish to become my student, do you not, and by so doing fulfill the earnest wish of your father?"

"You have rightly guessed, sir," said Claude, with tears in his eyes, and a look of anxious inquiry shining from their dark, expressive depths.

"I can highly appreciate your desire, and it is but natural that you should seek to gratify it. Now, I will say to you that I shall be most happy to satisfy your ambition, and do all in my power to promote the interest of my friend's only son."

"Thanks, sir, many thanks," said Claude, his heart going out in a silent prayer of thankfulness to God for His kindness. "And now, sir, will you please name the terms?"

"Reasonably, my boy, reasonably. If you will sometimes assist me about the office in performing little duties, you can easily meet all expenses. You would like to come right away, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, if it will suit your convenience," replied Claude, rising to go, for the sun was low down the sky and the shadows beginning to lengthen, telling plainly that the day was almost done.

"Any time, my boy, will it be a pleasure to have so young

and agreeable a companion as yourself in my office," said the Doctor.

And Claude, unused to such compliments, blushed like a girl, and bidding him a friendly good afternoon, retired.

No need to tell of the joy that illuminated their hearts when, on Claude's return, he told Pearl of his good fortune; and that night at family devotion their hearts went out in prayer to God with more than usual fervor, as they thanked Him for His unutterable love and kindness to them in their orphaned loneliness and inexperienced youth.

CHAPTER III.

"Hope, of all passions, most befriends us here;
Passions of prouder name befriend us less.
Joy has her tears; and transport has her Death:
Hope, like a cordial, innocent, tho' strong,
Man's heart at once inspirits, and serenest."
—*Young*.

It is two weeks later. The old gardener and his wife have left their home by the lake to dwell with Pearl, for Claude has already begun his medicinal career, and Lottie is attending school in L——. Pearl often thinks of her, and wonders if she will return the same dear, loving girl as when she went away. A doubt sometimes steals into her heart, but the words uttered the night they stood waiting by the fountain, reverberating through the chamber of memory, again reassure her, and she firmly believes in her fidelity. Lonely, indeed, are the hours, but Pearl is trying to look on the bright side. There is no other alternative now to assuage her grief and solitude. These April days will soon pass away. Then school will open with its hours of study and its bevy of bright and smiling faces, among whose number she hoped to find a friend that would, in some measure,

compensate for the absence of her loved companion. The old gardener and his good wife also treated her like a spoiled child, doing everything in their power to promote her happiness, and Claude, dear, thoughtful brother that he was, had sent down to her from the city a beautiful golden canary in a lovely little wire cage "to charm away the hours," as he expressed it. She had hung it in the library close by the red curtained bay-window which looked out over the lake, and every morning on opening the door a burst of melody would pour forth to greet her from the little feathered songster, bringing joy and gladness to her lone heart. She spent most of the time within those sacred precincts rendered so by the presence of her sainted mother's portrait and books, and many relics of her beloved father. Besides being his favorite apartment, it had also been Claude's since his father's death. Here, too, sat the old-fashioned harp, draped in silk of faded azure, that was once her mother's, and whose chords had never been awakened save by those fingers now mouldering beneath the sod. She had often wished for the power to express the various emotions of her heart through the medium of music, but shrinking from the touch of so sacred a thing as it ever seemed to her, she would restrain herself with the hope of one day being able to call forth its thrilling harmony with a master touch, such as that angel mother had in those few short sunny days of her married life. Her own little boudoir, too, was a charming place, invested with sundry articles of her own workmanship to give it attraction, and here, also, were spent many hours, looking out over the surrounding landscape, the far-away blue, hazy hills and the limpid lake, now being divested of their winter garb to again don that of sunny, verdant spring. Altogether, she was happier than she ever dared to hope.

Meanwhile, Claude is passing many an hour of hard study in his new home; yet there is some pleasure and recreation connected with it, for his kind friend, the Doctor, insists on his not applying himself too steadily at first—a good mental and physical precaution. The Doctor, his wife and three interesting children—Bell, Mary and Bertie—comprise the family, and many little

offices of kindness do they perform to afford him comfort and enjoyment. The only real impediment is the thought of Pearl in loneliness at home. She had wept bitter tears on the morning of his departure. He observed her struggle to restrain them, and then he knew that, through all the long winter, she must have often striven to appear happy when her heart was burdened with sadness. Perhaps better days would come by and by. He hoped so, and every night before he laid his head upon his pillow he prayed so, too.

The thought of Lottie, also, would often intrude upon his moments of leisure. She was being removed still further, day by day, from their humble sphere, by education, and by her association with those in the temple of learning, many of whom, in all probability, were her equals in wealth and station. Surrounded by all these influences, would she still remember her early friends? Ah! he feared, and dark forebodings disturbed his tranquility; but, after all, what did it matter? She was nothing—never could be anything to him; yet he cared, for Pearl's sake. He would soliloquize: Ah, Claude! the words that fall from thy lips may delude thee, but the heart, that active little monitor that beats beneath thy bosom, can never deceive. 'Tis a faithful adherent to the shrine of truth, and may indeed thrust many an arrow of pain and anguish.

This, his temporary home, possessed many attractions in itself—many sources of amusement of which he readily availed himself during his spare moments. The great library of richly bound volumes, the conservatory with its gorgeous tropical plants, its fountains and warbling birds, the music room with its elaborately-carved, sweet-toned instruments of various kinds, and, what he prized above all else, the art gallery with its fine collection of portraits, landscape paintings and elegant statuary by the best masters. There was no luxuriant resort of that great house to which he did not have free access.

On an April day of alternate showers and sunshine, when the Doctor and his wife had gone out, Claude laid aside his books, thinking he would employ his few moments of leisure in the art department, which never failed to amuse him. As he wandered

there alone, one portrait, in range with those of the family, particularly arrested his attention. It was that of a fair young girl—a type of the beautiful blonde, with features of rare intellectual mould. Hair like sunlight crowned her regal head, and fell gracefully in long heavy curls, like coils of gold, over her perfectly formed shoulders and white mist-like drapery. The eyes, like dewy spring violets, large and mournful, were veiled with dark lashes; the chin was fairly rounded, and the arms, for beauty of form, rivalled those of the Venus de Medici.

But what most attracted the attention of Claude was the look of deep sorrow which emanated from the expressive eyes and lingered about the sweet mouth. Some blight must have fallen over her young life. He thought he had never seen such exquisite grace, beauty and intellect as were depicted within that countenance. Perhaps it was a picture of the artist's fancy. He could hardly conceive the reality of so lovely a being—not that his heart was affected, but there was something about it to please, to interest, to be studied. Besides, there was a certain resemblance to some one he had seen before, he could hardly divine who as yet.

As he stood there rapturously gazing, the door swung back, and Bell, the Doctor's daughter, bounded in wild and child-like, exclaiming, "Oh, here he is, brother Bertie, looking at Grace's picture," to a curly-headed, rosy-cheeked mischief who came bounding gaily along. Then turning to Claude: "Isn't she beautiful? She is papa's ward, and is now away at school in L——. She will not be home until vacation."

Then, indeed, there was an original to this peerless portrait, this house was her home and sometime he should meet her. The school, also, was the very one Lottie was attending, thought Claude. Would they meet, she and this lovely stranger? and would they know and love each other?

"Oh! I had almost forgotten," said Bell, bringing his pleasant thoughts suddenly to a termination; "but I came to seek you for that scapegrace cousin of ours, Paul Marshall, is in the library, and we want you to get acquainted and entertain him until papa comes home. He has just returned from Europe,

where he has been finishing his education. I thought he might be sobered down by this time, but I guess he's the same as ever, by the way he took sister Mary up and hugged and kissed her, enough to smother anyone, in spite of all her screams and kicks. And he would have done so to me, *big me*—just think—had I not ran away, as an excuse, to find you.”

Claude smiled as he thought that only six golden summers had passed over the flowery pathway of her life, and, taking the tiny hands held out towards him so pleadingly, he and the merry-hearted children wound their way to the library below. He had heard Paul Marshall spoken of as, a handsome, generous, fun-loving sort of a fellow, rather wild than otherwise, though not given to excess; and the Doctor had expressed the hope that education would tend to subdue those few traces of rudeness in his character, and bring him home greatly improved. But Claude was not prepared to witness such perfect, Apollo-like grace and beauty in one of his own sex as burst upon his view when he opened the door: for, standing there where the light fell full upon him, Claude took in his whole form at once. He was rather tall, admirably proportioned both in form and feature, with light brown hair which slightly curled above his broad brow; eyes blue, earnest and intelligent, Grecian nose, and a finely cut mouth expressive of pride and a certain determined will of his own. There was a careless dignity about him as he came forward, hand extended, and said, as a smile lit up his countenance:

“My uncle’s student, I believe. You were mentioned in his last letter to me. I am Paul Marshall; you have doubtless heard me spoken of ere this.”

“I have, indeed,” returned Claude, shaking his hand heartily; “and I regret to say the Doctor and his wife have gone for a drive. They are expected momentarily, however, and will be very glad to welcome you back again, no doubt. I have been passing a few moments in the art gallery.”

“A favorite haunt of mine,” said Paul. “If you are at leisure I would like to visit it again. During my three years’ absence, uncle having traveled in that time, he has probably added to his

previous fine collection. I am somewhat of an artist myself, and have devoted much of my time, while in Europe, to painting."

"I will gladly return thither, Mr. Marshall, for I find the art gallery a source of much real pleasure to me;" and together they sought the favorite retreat.

"Oh, there's Grace Nellisse, uncle's ward. I always see her sad face first on opening this door. It seems to stand out more conspicuous than the others, poor child," said Paul, as they approached the picture, his face assuming an expression of thoughtfulness rather foreign to his usual nonchalance. "The death of her mother seemed to cast a withering blight over her young life. Have you ever met her?"

"I have never had the pleasure. She had left home before I commenced my studies," replied Claude.

"Wealth is hers, beauty and even talent, yet she is not happy," continued Paul. "She is as good as she is beautiful, and seems so unconscious of her attractions, which yields an additional charm to the many she already possesses. A great home-child, too. It was not without a great deal of persuasion from uncle that she consented to go away to complete her education. She preferred a tutor at home;—but here I am rattling on about some one you never saw. I guess you will thank me to change the subject to one of more interest."

"Oh, no. The beauty of her picture, although the original is yet a stranger, has already awakened, not only my interest, but my sympathy," returned Claude, as he studied each lovely lineament.

"Here is one I have not seen," said Paul, passing on—"a beautiful Italian landscape. What a golden mist the setting sun casts over the lake and yonder distant hills!"

"It puts me in mind of our own little lake at home," observed Claude. "We have beautiful scenery down that way."

"How would it be for me to spend a few days there, sketching?"

"Capital," said Claude, with enthusiasm. "I should like so much to behold its various beauties on canvass. Moss Lake and Glen, we call it, from the vast quantities of beautiful moss

that grow thereabouts. It is only a short distance from the city. Our home is right near the lake-shore, and you will be gladly entertained during your stay."

"Thanks. I think I will avail myself of the opportunity on some of the coming summer days. Perhaps you will be at leisure to accompany me?"

"Ah, yes. I dare say I shall hardly be able to remain here during all the hot weather. Oh! there's the Doctor!" he added, as his jolly face appeared in the doorway.

"Ha, ha! There's a face I hardly expected to see when I left home. How are you, old boy," he exclaimed, patting him on the shoulder and seizing his hand.

"Quite well, I assure you, uncle. A foreign climate has greatly improved my health."

"So I am convinced by your rugged appearance. I suppose it is unnecessary to introduce Mr. Trevelyan here to you," he continued, laughing, "as you seem to be quite well acquainted already. Any one would think you were old friends; at least so I thought, as I stood for a moment in the entrance before Claude's eye detected my presence; but now let us return below. Your aunt will be getting impatient."

He had scarcely finished speaking when his wife, with eyes brimful of joyful tears, came bounding into the room exclaiming: "Did you think I was going to wait any longer to see my boy;" and throwing her arms around his neck she gave Paul a hearty kiss. "You haven't changed much, though, except to grow more tall and manly, and, if possible, handsomer," she said, smilingly, stepping back and taking a survey of his person.

"Look out, aunt, I fancy I see a bit of green in the eyes of a certain person back of you," said Paul, glancing slyly at his uncle and winking at Claude.

"Yes, my lady," said the Doctor, accepting the joke and laughing with a zest, "I didn't know before you were such an adept at flattery."

"Oh, I have only been taking private lessons of you, and am just putting them into practice," she replied gaily.

"A very apt scholar. I hope all my pupils will attain such

perfection;" and after all joining in a hearty laugh they sought the library. Soon tea was served, and the evening passed rapidly away with stories from Paul of his adventures in a foreign land, witty sallies from the Doctor and his wife, and music from Paul, who played the harp admirably, accompanied by Claude on the guitar.

Time passed on, nothing of note occurring again until mid-summer. The Doctor and his wife were visiting the seaside, and Claude and Paul were preparing to go out to Moss Cottage. Pearl knew they were coming, and very fortunately, her two weeks' vacation came just at that time. Lottie was coming home then, too. Somehow it seemed that all her joy came at one time. She had received letters from Lottie frequently, but the last ones had chilled her. They did not seem warm and fervent like Lottie. She had spoken, too, of a dear friend she had found there, and she made particular mention of her wealth. Pearl strove to think it was only her own fancy, and that Lottie herself was the same as ever. Besides, had not Lottie as much right to find a friend as she? Sunny-hearted Clara Lawson, with her sweet smiles and winning ways, had found a warm place in Pearl's heart. She was mild, gentle, affectionate and lady-like in her demeanor, and clung to Pearl as to a fond sister; yet with all this, Pearl could not love her as she did Lottie.

But who was this young artist Claude was going to bring to their humble home. He had finished his education in Europe, so the letter ran, and besides, was talented and wealthy. Probably he was a high-bred gentleman—a proud and haughty aristocrat. She would rather, on the whole, he would not come. She did not believe she would like him, and his presence would restrain their freedom. Such people were always so formal and affected! But he did come, in spite of all her hopes that something might transpire to keep him at home; and what was her surprise to find Paul Marshall scarcely more than a boy in appearance, with manners as free and easy as Claude's own; careless, winsome and fascinating in the extreme.

Claude was delighted at the prospect of spending a season at home, and it seemed to him it had never looked so beautiful as

on this day of their arrival. Paul Marshall also went into ecstasies, declaring that he should have no lack of lovely scenery to sketch in such a bewitching little Eden-nook as this, for the pure white cottage flecked with amber drops of sunshine, the forest with its tall trees and nodding giant plumes, and the lake like a sheet of molten silver on whose bosom Pearl's little boat, the Sea-shell, lay idly rocking, did indeed present to the view a charming rural picture; and Paul was surprised beyond measure when he beheld the exceeding beauty of her face combined with such perfect grace and affability of manner. He had heard of the "Pearl of the Lake," but had never once dreamed this famed beauty was the sister of unpretending Claude. His heart beat strangely, and before he had passed one hour in her presence he knew Pearl Trevelyan had produced that effect without an effort, which all the belles and beauties of the fashionable circle in which he moved, with all their wiles and coquetry, had failed to accomplish. Oh, how he envied Claude Trevelyan the possession of such a sister and her priceless love! He had seen her twine those white arms around Claude's neck with such fervent, child-like affection, as she came bounding down the walk in a dress of floating white to meet them on their arrival. Could he ever hope to win one so pure and guileless? Thus his thoughts ran. But, Paul, there's many a draught of bitterness ere the nectar of love is quaffed.

Lottie came, too, but there was a change, a strange formality unknown before, in her manner towards Pearl—something which seemed to claim superiority over her early friend. It cut Pearl to the heart, and after their first meeting she ran away by herself and wept bitter, bitter tears.

Claude looked on and saw it all, and could hardly believe he was not in a dream. She that he thought so noble, so true, changed to the degree perceptible in their first meeting! Ah! she was not what he had supposed, what he had sincerely hoped. He had expected to meet her, for Grace had written to the Doctor of their vacation, adding that she would not come home, but was intending to spend the time with a friend at her country home, a rural retreat on the banks of a beautiful river. He knew

that his sister's heart had received a wound that would never entirely heal, even though no more were inflicted. Her nature was very sensitive, and after once receiving neglect it was not so easily forgotten.

Lottie's conduct had partially removed the web of love which obscured his vision, and he was hardly sorry, for his own sake. He hoped it might be instrumental in subduing or entirely removing all that he felt for her. He pondered over it long, and finally broached the subject to Pearl one evening as they sat alone in the library after the others had retired.

"Do you not find a slight change in Lottie?"

Her only reply was a burst of tears. He crossed over and placed his hand upon her shining hair as she leaned upon the table, her face hidden in the muslin folds of her sleeve. "Pearl, Pearl! it will never do thus to indulge your grief. You have loved her too well; you have doted too much on her friendship. She was not perfect, as you supposed; but, like many another surrounded by wealth and the influences of a fashionable boarding school, prone to be enticed into its charmed circle, into its golden meshes, forgetting those outside. Very little strength of character does she possess, if, by the first temptation she has so far, apparently, yielded. We must not mind it, sister, dear. Just let the thought take possession of your mind that she is not, what our fancy painted her, a true, noble-hearted girl. If indeed changed so soon, Pearl, she is not worthy of our love. I know it is the memory of what she once was, or seemed to be, that causes you to grieve; but she had not been tried then. Had you thought that change of scene and associates would so quickly alter your friend, you would never have given her that deep, faithful love of your heart. Confidence in her you trusted is destroyed, and it is the disappointment that is so bitter."

Pearl had been weeping quietly while he was talking, but now she raised her head, and brushing away the tears said sadly:

"Yes, brother; you indeed speak the true feelings of my heart. Memory brings the pain. Although I have spent many a happy hour in her society, yet now that knowledge only brings regret. Had I known less of the power and pleasure of friend-

ship, I should never have realized what I have lost; but the Stanwick family is, and ever has been, haughty and arrogant. I might have known that one in so humble a station in life as myself, could never retain the love and friendship of Lottie Stanwick. Now pride shall come to my rescue. She shall never know of the arrow of pain she sent to my heart when she evinced such strange indifference at our first meeting."

"Still further," interrupted Claude, "you know, sister, that God does not look upon such conduct with approval. He is on our side, and is 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' Let us continue to do right, appear unchanged to Lottie if possible, and leave the result with God. Let us ask His guidance and direction;" and in the deep recess of the bay-window, where the odor of roses and geraniums came floating in, and the air-spirit gently stirred the red curtains, together, once again, they knelt before their Heavenly Father; after which, they retired, both lighter of heart and happier in mind.

Never did a brighter morning dawn upon the earth than the following, and every eye beamed with joy. Each heart beat high with anticipation, for the prospect of such delightful weather added unusual hilarity to their otherwise cheerful spirits, as there was to be a picnic. They had planned an excursion to a lovely grove on a neighboring mountain, and accordingly at an early hour, accompanied with suitable refreshments, they started—a merry company, comprising the inmates of Moss Cottage and Stanwick Manse, beside many in the immediate vicinity, including Pearl's school-friend, Clara Lawson, who looked fresh and pretty in a dress of white muslin, her brown hair drawn back from an unusually fair face, and bound with scarlet lillies; while Pearl was more bewitching than ever in a robe of mellow pink like the soft-tinted clouds of sunset, her hat swinging in one hand, and in the other a basket filled with the rarest flowers of the garden, which old Anthony had culled and presented to her that morning.

Lottie was more gaily, but not so suitably, attired as the others, with a gauze-like material of rose color, all bows and puffs and flounces; a hat loaded with flowers and the richest

of ribbons—"the latest style," she said, and a bouquet of rare exotics in her hand from their own luxuriant conservatory.

Through shady woodland paths they wended their way along the banks of a cool and limped stream, where, amid the darkest shadows, it formed an angry torrent, which all paused to admire, then, flecked with foam, dashed along, finding its rest in the basin of the lake; thence through meadows green, their voices reverberating with merriment at every step, until they arrived at the foot of the mountain, where, taking a path which wound through a clump of evergreens and along the base of dark towering rocks, they reached the beautiful grove. Everything had been tastefully prepared, Claude and Paul having superintended the arrangements, and the hours passed happily to all concerned. Lottie appeared more like herself, which increased Pearl's happiness as well as Claude's, yet for her sake more than his own. Towards him she had never manifested such tender regard as now; but he was more determined than before to conceal anything that might lead her to believe he esteemed her more than a friend. The thought of winning her was more hopeless than ever, for had she not manifested pride? Yes: The passion should be forever crushed out of existence—be conquered at any cost. And Lottie—she did love Claude Trevelyan, and to-day, she thought, just to-day, the last time we may meet for months, and out here where we have roamed in by-gone summer hours, I will throw off the pride that has begun to gain its mastery over my spirit, and bask once more in the sunshine of his presence. But Paul Marshall, they say, is rich. By the way, I must try to make a favorable impression on him. Therefore, when the young artist occasionally came round, with an unmindful nod and a merry word, her sweetest smiles were bestowed on him; and once when he sat down beside her on a mossy mound, at the foot of a sheltering elm, and, taking off his broad-brimmed hat—just the thing for rustivating in—began to fan her, with now and then a careless compliment and a look from his deep, earnest eyes, she thought she had almost gained a conquest. But not so: for Paul Marshall, although he had been accustomed to the admiration of the opposite sex, and liked

it exceedingly, had as true a heart to the real object of his love as ever beat beneath a man's bosom. Every moment spent in Pearl's presence increased his love for her; but she seemed to shun him, and his nature was one that would exert every effort to appear indifferent, throwing off, apparently, all anxiety with that heedless nonchalance so characteristic of him, while away down, deep in his heart, rankled a pain as acute as that felt by many of a more yielding nature. So Pearl Trevelyan never dreamed of his love for her. She knew that her heart beat strangely when he spoke to her, and a look from his beautiful eyes would thrill her very soul; but when, that day, she saw him sitting so cosily by Lottie's side, the knowledge that it was love came to her for the first time. Lottie was an heiress, and her great wealth, fine manners and grace of person would far outshine her, occupying the humble sphere she did in life; and besides, one who had traveled as Paul Marshall had, could not fail to see her ignorance of the world, and so no ray of hope penetrated her heart.

But when the sun had gone down behind the mountain, and they had started for home, Lottie had laughingly taken Claude's arm, Clara Lawson and Tom Pendleton walked together, and, in short, all had coupled off. It was her lot to walk by Paul Marshall's side. Oh, how short the way seemed, leaning on his arm! for she could not refuse when it was proffered with such a bewitching glance; and once, when they were all standing on a table-rock viewing the surrounding country, a slight breeze bore her jaunty sun-hat down among the shrubs a number of feet below, he sprang lightly down the steep declivity, regardless of the sharp stones and cruel briars, returning it to her with a scratched and bleeding hand. She thanked him with a trembling voice as she said:

"Oh, Mr. Marshall, I am so much obliged; but it was not worth such exertion, I assure you. Besides, see how the briars have torn your hand."

"That's of no consequence," he replied. Then how her heart fluttered when he bent down and whispered in his low, winning tones: "I would do anything for *you*."

Oh, what a thrill of happiness permeated her being then. Those words to her! He could not be so indifferent as his former appearance had indicated; and they sank deep, and still, in after years, when the fountains of memory were stirred, they would come up like pearls from its crystal depths to cheer her saddened life.

After their return home a sail on the lake was proposed, and a great part of the company remained to participate. The moon shone, sifting through the branches above its arrows of silver light; the splash of oars, like the chime of tiny bells, kept time to the music of the guitar; the old harp in the library had been unveiled for the first time to-night, and Paul Marshall's master fingers struck the chords in harmony with his own soft, thrilling voice, which resounded over the shimmering waters, altogether making the place seem like an enchanted lake.

Pearl was happy, for Paul had taken the vacant place by her side, and now and then, when there came a soft, sweet strain in the music, he would look down at her with his earnest, penetrating glance as though he would read her very soul. She was glad the moonlight did not strike her face, for she could feel the hot blood mantling her cheek, and her heart beating strange and wild. Lottie sat by Claude, too, and now and then a stifled sigh escaping her at his indifference, and her proud heart rebelled that she had ever allowed herself to condescend so low as to love one so much beneath her station; yet while these thoughts crossed her mind something seemed to whisper in her secret heart: Claude Trevelyan, morally as well as intellectually, is far more than your equal, Lottie Stanwick. So that night she went home dissatisfied with herself and everybody else, for Claude Trevelyan this evening had treated her almost coldly and Paul Marshall appeared devoted to Pearl.

It was a late hour ere the inmates of Moss cottage retired, and not before prayer, in which especial thanks were returned for their preservation and enjoyment through the day. Paul Marshall was not accustomed to this religious devotion, but those peaceful hours when the brother and sister knelt together in holy prayer never left his memory, and afterward their hal-

lowed influence went far towards leading him to the Savior. The next day was the Sabbath. They all attended the little white church about a mile distant from Moss Cottage, and, as Pearl took her wonted place in the choir, her rich, thrilling alto reaching the fine ear of Paul, he sat breathless, listening like one entranced. In sweetness it equaled the finest he had ever heard, transforming her face into one of angelic purity, as she raised her eyes heavenward, her whole soul poured forth in the sacred song. In the Sabbath school, too, when she listened eagerly to every word of the teacher as he expounded the Scripture so eloquently, his eyes beamed with admiration; and once, when she caught them fastened upon her, she almost faltered in the answer, and the scarlet blood mantled brow, cheek and swan-like neck. This he noticed for the first time, and hailed it hopefully as the first slight indication of his power; but the fear that he had perceived her embarrassment caused Pearl to assume a still more settled coldness and reserve towards him, which puzzled the young artist beyond measure.

The next day a sadness seemed to pervade the household, for on Tuesday the young men were to return to the city. Paul spent much of the time sketching, while Claude and Pearl wandered through the woodland culling wild flowers, talking of the past, the present and the future, sharing each other's hopes, and uttering words of counsel and encouragement. The time was near at hand when they must be parted again, after hours of such excessive happiness, and Claude said, though his voice trembled even then:

"We must not repine, dear sister. Such days will come again sometime in the sunny future. How many in this weary world have such pleasure entirely barred out from their homes and their lives! We must be content though separate. God knows best. We must dismiss all such selfish desires and be thankful that clouds do sometimes come to make us long for something higher to show us the folly of constant worldly enjoyment."

"Yes, brother, I know it is all right just as it is; but my heart will be dreary and lonely sometimes. Those left behind, you know, are always the saddest, for the accustomed place of the

loved one is vacant, making the house seem almost desolate. Anthony and Ellen do everything in their power to promote my happiness, and Clara Lawson, with her pleasant, cheerful ways, somewhat supplies the place of Lottie, who, I fear, will no more be just the same to me. But never again shall I bestow such love on another—even on devoted Clara Lawson—until I have *tried* her friendship.”

“Allow me to inquire how you propose to do that, dear Pearl”

“I believe, Claude, the chill winds of adversity will try the strength of a friend, and that the time may come when they will blow with a still harsher blast over my life than they have yet done: For sometimes, Claude, though why I know not, I feel a presentiment of coming evil.”

We can hardly imagine the wild, strange thoughts that possessed him then, as she uttered these foreboding words. Would the knowledge ever come to him of the existence of her true parents? If so, he would be in duty bound to reveal the secret of her whereabouts. And would they wrest her from him? Would she wish to leave the home of her birth to dwell with strangers, even though it would be their legal and natural right? Perhaps this was the coming sorrow of her life. But oh! he could not reveal it to her now. No, no! Even the thought was distressing. He would endure it in silence and let her peaceful present continue while it might.

“You do not speak, brother,” remarked Pearl, noticing his abstraction.

And, suppressing the great agony at his heart with an effort, he returned: “Look on the bright side, sister. You know that is my motto. Let no dark forebodings cloud your young life. ‘Virtue reaps its own reward.’ Conduct your whole life so as to please the Savior and He will take care of the rest, and give you that peace and joy which never faileth.”

The mystic shades of twilight were creeping over the earth, the low, sad notes of a whip-poor-will resounded from the neighboring wood, a slight breeze rustled through the trees, lightly tossing Pearl’s golden hair and wafting the fragrance of southern wood, heliotrope and geranium around her, until she was

perfectly enveloped in a bewildering mist of perfume. She was in the garden culling flowers and forming bouquets to fill the vases in the respective apartments of Paul and Claude. Suddenly from the library window there pealed forth on the balmy air the sweet, wailing music of the harp, accompanied by a voice of thrilling power, which she recognized at once as Paul Marshall's. He was singing a low, sad song, and the last of every verse breathed the word "farewell." He sang it, too, as though it came from the inmost depths of his soul. Was it the thought of their coming separation that had prompted this song. A deep sadness stole over her, and before she was aware she was weeping. He had not seen her yet, perhaps, as the shrubs partially concealed her from view; so waiting till the last notes died away in a mournful cadence, she placed the flowers among the spears of dewy grass, and, hurrying down the avenue, entered the Sea-shell and darted over the waters to a little nook sheltered by overhanging boughs, there to dream and weep alone. Nobody would molest her here, she thought; nobody would take the little path that wound through the bushes to her hiding place, and they could not follow her over the water, for the other boat had been locked in the boat-house. So she could sob to her heart's content and give vent to the long pent-up feelings which had longed for an opportunity to burst forth.

She had been sitting thus for a few moments, the little boat rocking idly at her feet, the whip-poor-will's song still ringing over the waters to her ear, the evening stars twinkling in the fathomless blue, and the great round moon, like a ball of yellow gold, coming up over the mountains. But she heeded not the beauty of the scene, for her face was buried in her hands and the hot, scalding tears were chasing each other over her cheeks. Neither did she hear the rustling of the leaves as a strong hand parted the interlacing boughs, nor the light footsteps, until a voice, soft and sweet as the murmuring waters of the lake, spoke her name: "Pearl! Pearl of the Lake indeed, to-night you seem to be, sitting here on its moonlit banks in your dress of white. How the name becomes you—pure and lovely as the gem itself. Pardon me, but I saw your dress gleaming through

the shrubs in the garden. I saw it flutter down the avenue, and then, like a white sea-bird, dart across the lake, and I could not refrain from seeking your side, for it is the last time, you remember, little girl. I must bid you farewell to-morrow."

She was looking up now, her great dark eyes shining mournfully forth from beneath her long, sweeping lashes wet with tears. She tried to smile but the attempt was vain, and again covering her face with her hands she burst into fresh tears.

"Oh! tell me, won't you, why you weep," he pleaded tenderly, "and let me be your friend. Is it because of the lonely hours you must spend after your brother's return to the city?"

"Yes, oh yes," she whispered.

"But, may I ask one favor, little girl? Will you not think of me sometimes? Tell me, tell me, Pearl, shall I be missed when I am gone?"

"Yes, oh, so very much!" she murmured involuntarily.

"Thanks, thanks for those cheerings words. I shall never forget them, little darling, though years on years roll by; and when the summer is gone and the autumn comes once more, I shall visit this glen again, and to-night, here by the lake, I will bid you a fond farewell. Will you not give me just one parting kiss? I should prize it so much." He added, as he noticed her hesitation, "I fear Claude will claim them all to-morrow."

She reluctantly complied, and entering the little barque, seated side by side, they floated slowly homeward. Oh! the intoxicating joy that filled her heart as they glided though the shining path which the moon cast across the water, though the shadows lay all around them enhancing its brightness, and Pearl, closing her eyes, wished they might float on forever—yes, forever—she cared not whither, only that this sweet, bewildering spell might never be broken, that she might never have to leave Paul Marshall's side, even though the shimmering waters received them into its crystal depths. How sweet, could they but sink together into oblivion during this dream of enchantment and beauty and love! She felt for the moment that she would rather die than part, rather die than live over again the lonely

hours to come when he was gone—doubly so that they had met.

The path was full of light through which they were floating. Perhaps it might be emblematical of their future. But just then the moon, passing under an inky cloud, enveloped all the earth in a dense shadow. A shudder passed through her frame, and involuntarily she shrunk closer to Paul. He placed his arm around her slight form and passionately kissed her. "My darling, my darling;" that was all he said; but the words burned in letters of fire in the chamber of memory through all the years of her future, and were never lost in the darkness of the past.

Soon the Sea-shell grated on the beach, and as they stepped lightly ashore the moon broke forth from the black, cloud-drapery, casting a halo of golden glory around them like a smile of peace breaking through the shadows. A joyful light broke over Pearl's hitherto sad face, and a strange happiness beamed from Paul Marshall's eyes. This bright termination to the dream lately shadowed, inspired Pearl with new hope, and sauntering listlessly up the avenue, these two, just entering upon the morning of love, entered the cottage.

The adieux next day were spoken with many sighs of regret, Anthony and Ellen mingling their tears with those of Pearl, and lamenting that Master Claude was not to make Moss Cottage his home any more for so long.

CHAPTER IV.

"In joyous youth, what soul hath never known
Thought, feeling, taste, harmonious to its own?
Who hath not paused, while Beauty's pensive eye
Asked from his Heart the homage of a sigh?
Who hath not own'd with rapture smitten frame,
The power of Grace, the magic of a Name?"

After their departure Pearl hardly knew how to content herself. Somehow there was a restlessness about her, and a yearning for something beyond her grasp. A pair of blue eyes haunted her, a sweet, winning voice was ever chiming in her ear, and she did not feel as happy as before they came. Ah, Pearl Trevelyan! that passion of passions which gives you most intoxicating pleasure, yet the acutest pain, has entered your girl's heart, and it will be long, very long, before the old peace and freedom will come back to it again.

Clara Lawson was her almost daily companion. Walking home from school together, wandering through the woodland, traversing the lake in Pearl's little skiff, and sometimes riding horseback, they spent many gladsome hours.

"I have been wondering," said Clara, as they sat together one day in the little summer house in the garden, "what I should do without your priceless love and friendship."

"But you will not think so long, Clara. Soon you will not come for it. I have lost all faith in the latter."

Pearl spoke almost unkindly, though unintentionally, and the words stung her friend with their bitterness, causing hot tears to flow, and her bosom to heave with sobs.

"Oh, what have I done! Forgive me, Clara, dear Clara," she said pleadingly, sorry that she had been so thoughtless. "I was cruel and unjust, but the change in one who once professed and declared as much as you, caused me to forget that there ever could be a true and loving heart. I hope you will, indeed, esteem my friendship as highly as you do at present. I assure you it shall never be known to fail; and should adversity's chill

winds blow across your life-path, dear Clara, remember my hand shall ever be extended to help you."

"Those words cheer me, dear Pearl. I believe you will ever be true, and this time it shall not be bestowed in vain. You will ever find me the same fond and faithful friend, though the whole world forsake you."

Pearl could scarcely refrain from believing in the fidelity of Clara, yet she did not allow that perfect trust to take possession of her heart that once did, for, as she had said to Claude, the trial must first come; and why wonder, after the experience she had passed through. Little did she dream in what manner that trial would come; but they sometimes put on a strange garb.

"Oh, there comes Ellen with a pail full of the most delicious berries," said Pearl. "Just look, Clara. Let us go in and have a taste;" and dropping their work on the rustic seat beside them, they bounded along the well-worn path, through the little wicket gate, and entered the kitchen where Ellen, weary and exhausted, the certain effects of the heat and her long walk in search of the fruit, had sunk into a chair and was fanning herself with her sun-browned shaker.

"Sure, chile, an' I'm nearly dead with the heat. I'm sartin it will be a good while before I venture so far again after the pesky things. They're not worth the trouble."

"You must indeed be weary; but where did you find such a nice lot of them?"

"Oh, I'm sure I can't tell ye. I wandered here and there and everywhere; I can hardly tell myself. They were scattered, and I met such a queer woman. I must tell ye about it. And she said such strange things about you, Pearl, too."

"About *me*, Ellen?"

"Yes, about you, chile. I was gathering berries, and she came upon me all unawares. No one can tell where she came from nor where she went to; for she came like a sperrit, (an evil one, I mean), and she disappeared like one."

"But what did she say? I am getting impatient to know."

"So ye shall, chile. I paid little 'tention to her, but she kept mighty close to me all the time, and finally said: 'Berries pretty

thick, round here.' I answered 'yes,' and as she went on from one thing to another, I replying by 'yes' or 'no,' and picking away from the spot fast as I could, when she inquired: 'You are the gardener's wife, at Moss Cottage, I believe?' I answered 'yes,' shortly, wondering what would come next, for I'd no idee before, she knew who I was. 'And how does your charge, bonnie Pearl, prosper?' 'Happy as the day is long,' I replied. 'But what do you know about her and Moss Cottage?' I asked. 'Know, do you ask me? What do I know? Ah, more than I can tell, woman; more than I can tell. Time, the great revealer of secrets, may whisper it in your ear some day, but until then ask me not, ask me not. You'll know it soon enough for your own happiness and young Claude Trevelyan's, too, I'm thinking. Would that it were blotted forever from my own treacherous memory.' Then pausing a moment and walking wildly back and forth, she went on: 'Woman, woman! Do you know what it is to have a great haunting sorrow wearing away your life, drinking hourly your heart's blood. Oh! Oh! What am I saying? You know not, you know not. But if she's happy, if she's happy—thank God for that—only there's another—another. Oh, woman! I cannot. My brain seems turning wild. I shall go mad. Breathe not one word I have spoken to you, I entreat. Adieu;' and she walked quickly away. I stooped to pick a beautiful cluster of berries, and when I glanced again she was gone—must have disappeared within the forest."

• "Oh, Ellen, Ellen! Who is she? What can she mean?" said Pearl, her face pale as death, her lips apart and her eyes dilated with a strange fear.

"Nobody but some poor crazy critter who has happened to see and remember ye."

"But the secret, Ellen, which, if revealed, would lessen Claude's happiness as well as your own."

"Don't speak of it, darlint; and, indade, have'nt I nursed ye from yer early childhood, and had ye under my own eye day in and day out? Sure, there can be no secret about yer life, honey, dear. Set yer mind at rest on that."

But the old woman's words did not suffice, although they partially diminished her apprehensions. Yet what the weird woman had said kept continually ringing in her ears, and a nameless dread seemed to possess her, of some impending evil. Yet, as Ellen had said, she had watched over her from infancy. Surely there could hardly be anything without her knowledge; and thus dismissing her unhappy thoughts, as best she could, she strove to be light-hearted as before. But this occurrence added to her loneliness, and sadly changed our little friend, even more than she realized herself.

Clara perceived it and longed to share her confidence; but the peculiar distrust she had of friendship caused her to withhold it and share the burden alone, when it might have been greatly alleviated by the ready sympathy and affection of Clara.

One day in the Indian summer, the two girls, mounted on their ponies, were riding slowly along the dusty road past Stanwick Manse. The scenery was delightful, and they seemed to be enjoying it at their leisure. To the right, spacious fields stretched away in the distance, threaded here and there with silvery streamlets; mountains reared their lofty tops beyond, while farther along was a dark, extensive forest. The day was extremely warm, and a golden haze overspread all like a web of gossamer. They rode quite a distance in silence, until a turn brought them to another narrow and untraveled road which branched off into the wood.

"I am out for exploration and adventure to-day, more than anything else," said Pearl. "Let's take this path, Clara."

"Oh, no," she exclaimed, in alarm. "It is the road which leads to that old haunted house."

"Capital, capital!" said our heroine. "I have heard much about it, but have never passed or visited it, and now is just the time. Come, Clara," and giving the horse a sharp cut with the riding-whip she was soon within the mazes of the forest, her friend following reluctantly.

A terrific torrent roared and dashed and foamed within its shadowy recess, and on a mossy seat, close where it lashed in maddest fury, lay a blood-red scarf, trailing its scarlet length

down over the carpet of dead leaves and vines. The two girls started, looked inquiringly at each other, and then around through the dense shadows as though expecting to see a human form. Clara turned pale as death and was the first to break the silence.

"Oh, Pearl, what does it mean? Let's get out into the light, quickly. This is such a dark, wierd place, and the roar of the angry waters strikes me with horror. I cannot endure it."

"Hush, Clara dear. Do not be alarmed. Though slightly startling, this little spice of mystery only fires me with a greater desire to press forward. Some one probably occupies the haunted house; but we must hasten," and starting their horses into a gallop they soon left the forest behind, and, passing down a rough and steep descent, followed a curve in the road which wound round a slight eminence and along the margin of a deep ravine, and came at once in full view of the haunted house, situated in a wild, deserted looking hollow below them. Giant trees towered gloomily above the dingy structure, almost hiding it from sight, and the massive iron gate hung neglectfully on one rusty hinge. To the left was a continuation of the woodland stream, which rushed on like an angry demon; while on the north side was what might once have been a garden, now filled with tangled weeds and briars. In short, everything was greatly dilapidated and in strict conformity with the loneliness of the place.

During their ride through the forest, and the close attention they were obliged to pay to the rugged path they were pursuing in order to pass securely, they had not perceived the inky cloud that had risen in the west and was now ready to burst upon them, until great, round drops began to fall, and the rumbling of distant thunder was heard, when Clara, the perfect picture of fear, stopped her horse and exclaimed:

"Oh, Pearl! what shall we do? Let's go back and find shelter in the forest. There is going to be a dreadful shower."

"That would be folly, Clara. There is great danger from lightning in such a place as that, and I propose that we seek refuge here in this old house. It may not be inhabited, and

should it be they can not refuse the protection of their roof for so short a time."

Clara did not like the idea, for she was very timid, but she saw no other way, and passing through the gateway and along the neglected path, the great, black, staring exterior of the gloomy old building boldly confronted them. No signs of inhabitants were visible, except that in the west wing one of the uppermost windows, which opened on a balcony, was raised, and a torn purple curtain fluttered out upon the wind. The shutters of the other windows were closed.

"Oh, dear," said Clara, impatiently, "I shall be glad if we ever get back home again. Everything is dark and horrible here. Who ever heard of a purple curtain any where else? No wonder they call it the haunted house. I should call the whole place haunted as well."

"Tut, tut, Clara! This just suits me, if we get into no worse trouble," said Pearl, though a trifle pale in spite of her bravery. "I rather think this house contains inmates. However, we will enter and explore."

The rain was falling in torrents now, the thunder boomed alarmingly near, and the lightning played fearfully. They reigned their horses under a low shed in the rear and, dismounting, gathered up their habits, and, arm in arm, ascended the old rickety steps which appeared to be the main entrance to the building. They found themselves in a broad, mildewed hall entirely vacant, and which echoed every footstep, making a sound like the tread of human feet above. Clara faltered, but a word of encouragement from Pearl proved all that was necessary; and so they passed on from room to room, each damp, desolate and covered with mould, until they had explored the east wing as well as the whole central part of the house.

The roar of the elements without, the dash of the maddened waters, the clattering of the crazy old windows and loose clapboards, mingled with their echoing tread, did indeed make the dismal old structure appear like the habitation of shrieking demons. The two girls were pale and trembling with fear, but they passed silently on, not daring to pause and think in the

midst of this wild tumult; each praying in her secret heart that God would have mercy and spare them to return to their friends once more.

"I guess we need entertain no fears of finding anyone here," said Pearl, her voice scarcely heard above the clashing storm-artillery outside; but a moment later she was ready to recall her words, for on swinging back a ponderous door, creaking on its hinges, which led through a hall to the west wing, what was their surprise to find, placed in order against the wall, an old table and two high-backed chairs. They looked at each other in wonder, but neither spoke, and opening a door to the right they entered an apartment scantily furnished, with two or three weird pictures, suspended from the ceiling; and on the farther side, where the light struck it most forcible, a full-length portrait of a handsome young man about twenty-five years of age, with fine features, hair of a shining gold color, eyes large and dark, and mouth expressive of firmness and decision. There was something about the picture which seemed to draw Pearl with an irresistible fascination. She stood gazing long and fixedly upon it, when, at last, Clara broke the spell with the inquiry:

"Do you remember ever seeing anyone who resembles this picture?"

"Not to my knowledge," said Pearl.

"Do you wish me to tell you in whom I see a marked similarity?" queried Clara, again.

"Most assuredly, if you have any idea."

"Your own, dear self, before me. The same golden hair, the same eyes in color and expression, the same beautiful brow. Who can he be that looks so like my darling friend?" exclaimed Clara, with enthusiasm.

"You startle me. Are you not mistaken?" queried Pearl, her eyes still fixed upon it with a strange attraction.

"No, no: I am certain. It is a problem unsolved, yet, nevertheless, true. But come: let us seek further. This looks a little more like civilization," continued Clara, gaining courage,

and clasping her arm around Pearl, drew or almost forced her away from the picture.

Leaving this room they passed along the hall, and, opening a door on the left, entered another apartment like the last, containing but a few articles of furniture, but high, damp and ghost-like in its appearance.

"I think we had better venture no farther," said Pearl. "It is plain this house is inhabited, and we will return the way we come, and wait patiently in the east wing until the shower is over. It seems to be abating now, I think."

But as they turned, each intent on making her egress first, in the doorway, staring at them with wild, dilated eyes, face thin and ashy pale, framed in with hair black as midnight, stood a woman. Clara shrieked in alarm, while Pearl barely suppressed a startled cry.

"Good heavens! young ladies," said the woman, "what has brought you to my miserable abode? And is it an apparition? or are you, indeed, Pearl Trevelyan?" she continued, confronting her almost fiercely. "But why do I ask? I cannot be mistaken. Oh, why did you come? Did they send you to haunt me with that face? those eyes so like—so like! Oh, Merciful Heaven!" and sinking into a chair the woman covered her face with her hands and rocked wildly to and fro.

"Good woman," said Pearl, almost frightened out of her senses by this strange occurrence, and almost believing the woman to be demented, "we came hither to seek refuge from the storm, supposing this place uninhabited. I hope you will be so kind as to pardon our intrusion."

"Yes, yes," she replied, quickly; "yes, yes. Be seated. You are welcome to a shelter; but your presence awakened painful memories that had long slumbered. I thought the old wounds were healed, but no, no. My heart is bleeding again—broken, crushed."

Just then a rustle was heard—a step on the threshold—and before them, like the spirit of the storm, rose a form dark and weird, with wild, disheveled hair, dripping with rain and straggling over the dark stuff of her dress, a red scarf wound

about her person and trailing after her like a stream of blood. The two girls looked at each other, remembering at once the scarf on the mossy seat in the forest, and they came to the direct conclusion that this strange, young creature must have been the owner. Their thoughts ran, they hardly knew in what channel, but Clara began to think she had got into a nest of demons, while Pearl heartily wished she was safe again in Moss Cottage.

The old woman was the first to speak, and her wild, almost inhuman expression, softened almost to one of tenderness as she turned and gazed upon her child.

"Where have you been, Night, through all this raging storm?"

"Walking in the forest, and then as its fury grew less, coming homeward."

"But did you not notice the dark cloud in the west?"

"Yes, yes. But I wanted to see it lighten once in the woods, and I did—oh, I did," she said, clapping her hands in wild glee; "and it played so pretty among the trees, like fiery forks and chains; and once it splintered a great oak to the very roots, and what a crash came after! Ha, ha! It was grand;" and with her voice ringing and echoing through the lofty corridors, she bounded away nimble as a fawn, leaving the mother looking after her with a look of mingled pride and affection. She seemed to have forgotten herself for a moment in the presence of her child, but as she turned again into the room the same bitter, despairing, almost fearful expression, came into her beady eyes, and again sinking into a chair she resumed her rocking to and fro, and murmuring, as though to herself: "So many, many, long years ago! Oh, oh! Cruel, cruel! Go away, haunting face. Why will you torment me? Have not all these hours of misery atoned?" And the two girls, breathlessly and on tip-toe, left the room hurriedly, returning to the open air and, finding the sunshine once more taking the place of the storm-clouds, they mounted their horses and hastened homeward, leaving the strange old house and its stranger inmates far in the distance.

"But haven't we had a curious adventure, Pearl, dear," said Clara, as they emerged from the forest?

"Yes. And do you know I believe she is the very same woman Ellen met when she was gathering berries?"

"No doubt. I believe so myself."

"But what did she mean when she spoke of my eyes and face? Do I remind her of any one, I wonder? She almost said as much; and how came that beautiful picture in that dark old house? Isn't it all a dreadful mystery? Were it not for that I should believe the woman demented. You spoke of my resemblance to the portrait. Oh, it frightens me; and yet how can I be connected in any way with one like her. It makes me shudder."

"Surely, Pearl, such a thing is impossible. Besides, as Ellen said, you have been under her care from infancy."

"I am sure, I hope and pray not. But my fears are not all banished yet. What a daring, reckless creature that girl is, with her bold, gipsy face and staring black eyes, so like her mother's. She had on the identical scarf we saw on the mossy seat by the waterfall in the forest. She must have been wandering in some remote part."

"Most likely near the margin, as she saw the rising storm-cloud, she said," returned Clara.

"Do you know, Clara, I think there is a faint tinge of refinement lingering in the woman's nature, as though she had once been among civilized people. Particularly when she spoke to her child there seemed to be a softening in her manner, as though she were not wholly devoid of affection, at least. I can hardly believe she has always lived in this heathenish fashion."

"I agree with you, Pearl; but her words as well as her manner indicate that she has sometime passed through deep sorrow, and, by what she uttered last, I think she has committed some atrocious sin, which seems to be cankering her very life."

"There comes the Stanwick carriage," said Pearl, as they turned a curve in the road and saw it approaching. "Who can those two young ladies be, dressed so gaily in plumes and ribbons?"

“Why, don’t you recognize your friend Lottie?” said Clara, in surprise. “I am surely not mistaken. It is probably vacation and she is home with some friend.”

“Oh, yes. It is she, I see, as they come nearer. I did not think of its being vacation.” But her heart beat high with pleasure as she saw her familiar face once more, and she was preparing for a friendly salutation as they passed, when Lottie, slightly bending forward, inclined her head with a haughty bow. The act sped like an arrow of pain to the heart of Pearl, a great sob choked her, and it was only with a mighty effort that she succeeded in controlling her emotion. But Clara, dear, kind Clara, came to her rescue, as she ever did, with her ready sympathy, saying, as she reined her horse to the side of Pearl’s, “I would not mind her coldness, dear friend. It was plainly perceptible to me, but such silly pride is unworthy of regard. Try and never cast upon it one passing thought. Did you notice the young lady by her side? I could not help observing the amiable expression of her countenance and the gentility of her whole appearance.”

“No, not particularly,” replied Pearl, sadly. “Who can she be? Some school friend, probably.”

But as she rode on a deep sadness stole over her. She had almost forgotten their late adventure at the haunted house, and was thinking only of Lottie. Now, indeed, she was without a doubt of her pride and her intention to erect a barrier between them whose bounds she could not pass. Oh, it was singularly cruel that one who professed such undying friendship could ever so alter—could so soon forget the hours they had spent together—their many confidential talks, the nights they had slept in each other’s arms at Stanwick Manse, as well as in Pearl’s own little boudoir at Moss Cottage. Did the great bell of memory, ringing forever through the chambers of her heart, never find an echo within Lottie’s own? But no. They were sadly estranged from each other, and never, never would the bond of friendship and love unite them again; and that night, when she sought her own room, with none but God and the pitying stars to look down upon her, she knelt and poured out her full heart to Him

who hath said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Had there been a listening ear to hear that prayer, these words, simple, yet the most beautiful of all, would have greeted it as she murmured: "Oh, Father, help me, I implore Thee, to endure with patience this trial, and to cultivate a kindly feeling toward Lottie; to return love for hate and pity for scorn, and when at last it is ours to die, may the broken chain of friendship and love be relinked in that home of the blest where all are equal in wealth and station." Then throwing herself on the snowy couch she was soon sleeping sweetly and enjoying the blissful repose, both in body and mind, of the true Christian.

But we will return to the Stanwick carriage and its occupants, and just take a look at Lottie's companion as she reclines with a careless grace among the luxurious cushions, seeming now in a thoughtful mood. But have we not seen that face before? for, as we gaze, we find it no other than the original of the portrait in the art gallery of Dr. Norton's elegant mansion, Grace Nellisse, now on her way home from school crowned with the honors of a graduate, and gratifying the entreaties of her friend Lottie to stop a day or two with her ere returning to the city. She noticed the extreme hauteur of Lottie's bow, and a shadow of pain crossed her fine features as she inquired:

"Who was that sweet looking young lady nearest the carriage?"

"Oh, that was Pearl Trevelyan, and the other her friend, Clara Lawson. She lives in a little out of the way cottage, across the lake."

"Trevelyan? Trevelyan, did you say? Why that is the name of the young man studying with uncle, as he wrote me—Claude Trevelyan."

The hot blood rushed to Lottie's face, then receded, leaving it pale and cold. The mention of that name, when least expected, awakened unpleasant memories and created within her strong emotions, for, although proud, she could not forget him, try as she might. But his poverty banished all thought of anything farther, and so controlling herself with an effort she said:

"Yes. I believe her brother is in the city studying, but I'd no idea he was with your uncle."

"Yes, indeed; and he always speaks very highly of his student in his letters, as a very refined and talented young man. His sister is very beautiful, at any rate, and her bearing is that of a lady."

"They are refined and intelligent as most common people, but are very poor, possessing little more than a home, and the girl has only received a common school education."

"I do not consider poverty any disgrace."

"No: not wholly a disgrace, yet you must understand that such people can not expect to move in the society of wealth and fashion."

"I do not agree with you there. I know very many of the world's people get that foolish idea in their heads, but 'worth and respectability' is my motto. Have they those, they are worthy the society of kings and princes. People who hold that opinion have not the true principle of Christianity which God designed they should have, and I, for one, shall not be influenced by such vanity and arrogance. Those who move within the fashionable world, who possess both wealth and influence, are the ones, I believe, who should commence a reform and set a noble example before those weak-brained ones who consider outside show of greater importance than their soul's salvation. For, if they persist in their wicked course, they will most assuredly be lost, and then what would they not give to return to this earth and live a life of the deepest humility, could they but regain that lost privilege. If I am scorned for treating the poor and humble of this earth with kindness and respect, *so let it be*. I consider the friendship of such persons utterly worthless, and should be most happy to know if I were associating with a class of that kind."

Lottie was surprised at this outburst of true feeling from her friend, but, not at all coinciding with her views, felt relieved when she changed the subject by asking:

"I wonder if those Trevelyan girls who attend school are connected with this family? The name is rather uncommon."

"No; I suppose not. I should hardly think so. Their parents are very rich, and the girls extremely proud and haughty; especially the eldest one, my favorite, Genevieve."

"I have noticed your growing intimacy."

"Yes, and she used her utmost endeavor to persuade me to make her home my own next term. I have not fully decided, but rather think I shall do so, as I shall be very lonely after losing my room-mate, your own dear self. But excuse me if I abruptly change the subject by asking if Paul Marshall is a cousin of yours?"

"Not my cousin, but the Doctor's nephew. You forget he is not my uncle. That is only my pet name for him."

"Oh, yes; pardon me."

"Have you ever met Paul?"

"Once, at a picnic last summer when I was home on vacation. He came down with Claude Trevelyan to rusticate a little during the hot, sultry days."

"I have not seen him since his return from Europe, and Uncle writes that he is greatly improved. May I ask whether your impression concerning him was favorable?"

"It certainly was, exceedingly so. Very handsome, isn't he, and extremely agreeable?"

"He is, indeed, if the years have not changed him. I wonder if Uncle received my letter? If so the carriage will be sent for me to-morrow. Then after I get home I shall expect a visit from you before your return to school."

"I shall most certainly avail myself of the opportunity, but regret very much that I shall be obliged to return to school without you."

The vehicle had turned about and they were nearing home now, and so let us leave them this autumn evening and return to Claude as he sits alone in the library engaged in hard study.

It is nearing the hour to retire now, and laying down his book he lifts a small golden-clasped Bible from the table and begins to peruse its pages before retiring. As he turns over the gilt-edged leaves, he finds many passages marked which thrill his heart and correspond exactly with many he has marked in his

own Bible, among which are these: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest;" "The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death;" "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplication;" "God is an ever present help in time of trouble," and many others similar to those mentioned. He was just about to turn and find the name of the owner, when the door opened and the Doctor entered.

"Ah, Claude, my boy, up still? and reading in Grace's little Bible. How fresh it brings her to my memory. She was a good Christian, and her religious counsel and example, Claude, has helped me a great deal towards leading a better life. She it was who first led my good wife and myself to embrace Christianity."

"Noble girl!" exclaimed Claude, fervently.

"She is, indeed, noble; and to-morrow, I am happy to inform you, I send the carriage for her to Stanwick Manse, where she has been staying a few days with a friend."

The Doctor did not discern the slight pallor that overspread Claude's countenance in the lamp-light at those words, and so continued:

"I have never told you aught of her history. In fact, I know but little myself, but I will tell you as far as my knowledge extends. Her birth-place was in a far Eastern country, whither her father, with his accomplished Northern bride, had gone to amass wealth, in which he met with rapid success. Two lovely daughters, four years passing between their births, came to gladden their home, and, for a time, all went happy, until the youngest of those cherub children, a tiny infant, was lost; and, what was most heart-rending, not by death, which would have been far preferable, as it proved, but lost in a mysterious and unaccountable manner."

Claude started, almost holding his breath, as the Doctor proceeded:

"The mother, just at twilight one summer's day, sat in a small pavilion with her child. Wishing to return to the house for some article, she left her for a moment, almost buried among

the snowy pillows, and a few moments after, when she returned, the babe was not there. The poor woman informed her husband immediately, and earnest search was made in every direction by the servants and people of the vicinity, while the parents were almost frantic with grief; but their tears and prayers were of no avail, for nothing was ever found of the child. A few years after, they returned to this country where they remained, until about five years ago, when the mother died. I attended during her last illness, before which I knew but little about the family. After this mournful event the husband seemed utterly bowed down with sorrow and despair, and in a few months sailed for India, where, he hoped, travel and change of scene would somewhat palliate his suffering. He begged me to take his child, be to her a father and guardian during his absence, and I should be amply compensated. Thus I came in possession of so lovely a prize. He told me himself about the loss of his infant daughter, but narrated the circumstance as briefly as possible, as it appeared to give him such utter pain."

"But was there nothing about the child to identify it?" asked Claude, feeling it his duty, although his heart seemed sinking within him. However, he felt relieved when the Doctor replied:

"I can not tell you that, my boy. The loss had occurred so long previous that all hope was gone and that was not mentioned."

"Do you hear from her father often?"

"For over one year we have received no tidings, and can not conceive the reason; yet sincerely hope, for the sake of Grace, that all will yet come out right."

"But if the child should ever be found and the father return, how happy they might again be, even now, in the re-union."

"Oh, yes: for Grace has a slight remembrance of the little creature still, I have heard her say, though but a wee thing herself; yet we can never hope for that."

But Claude kept his thoughts to himself. He was not so sure. It was just about as many years since Pearl was brought to his father's house, and by what he had learned Grace was about four years older than Pearl; but nothing could be proved

without her father. So, until his return, which might never occur, he would still keep the secret close shut up within his own heart. He dared not breathe it, even to himself, and he hardly knew what his hopes were. He realized that the knowledge would bring happiness to two hearts, that of Grace and her father, if the relationship were proven, and it might also to Pearl, for wealth would be hers and the fond love of a father and sister, while she could never doubt the continuance of his own brotherly love which so many years had strengthened. So he would struggle to overcome the selfishness of his nature, and, if possible, bring this happiness to others.

The last few weeks had been solitary ones to him, for Paul, whose presence ever made the house bright and cheerful, as well as the Doctor's wife and little ones, had been away on a visit, only just returning the day before, and the strange, unaccustomed quiet had become monotonous and wearisome in the extreme, and he longed for a change. Besides, letters from Pearl had been very infrequent, which served to increase his loneliness. But the sunshine often follows the shower; so with the returning ones came brighter, happier days.

CHAPTER V.

"Hence far from me, ye senseless joys,
That fade before ye reach the Heart,—
The crowded Home's distracted noise,
Where all is pomp and useless art!
Give me my Home, to quiet dear,
Where Hours untold and peaceful move."

—*Mrs. Opie.*

The next day's sunset found Grace Nelisse at home for the first time in many months. She was greeted with extreme joy and affection by each member of the family, and congratulated on her success as a scholar. She received it all with the peculiar modesty which characterized her, and then, turning, was introduced to Claude Trevelyan, as he, at that moment, entered

from a walk, and, removing his hat with a gentlemanly grace, made a low bow. He was somewhat surprised when she offered her hand, and with simple frankness said:

"Uncle has spoken of you so many times in his letters, that I feel almost acquainted, although we have never before met. I hope you have learned to love our pleasant home?" she added, inquiringly.

"I have, indeed. It is impossible for one to remain long within its charming precincts without loving it," he said politely; and so their acquaintance began, and Claude, as he gazed upon her fair, girlish face, which had something of sadness about it, thought the original lovelier than the picture, if possible. Something in it startled him, too; for one day as he sat by the drawing-room window, a merry laugh broke upon the stillness, and looking out he saw Grace coming up the walk with the great house-dog by her side. Her hat was swinging in one fair white hand, and she looked so much like Pearl, as he had seen her many times, that, had he been in his own home, he would have called it her. Something farther to confirm his suspicion, he thought. He felt his heart drawn towards her even more as he noted the resemblance, but he did not mention the fact. He could not help often wondering to himself whether they had seen each other during Grace's stay at Stanwick Manse, but one day a letter came from Pearl which gave him some information on this point. It spoke of her meeting Lottie with a friend, of the cold bow received, and of her final belief concerning Lottie's intention to renounce her friendship entirely. She added that it had at first given her great pain, but that she was now trying to banish every remembrance of their former intimacy, and had partly succeeded, as she thought her unworthy of the least regard. Then saying, "I will tell you the particulars of my ride, when I see you, and the adventure we met with," it concluded.

Grace coming in as he was reading the letter, started and turned back as she said: "Oh, I fear I am intruding. Excuse me; I was not aware the room had an occupant just now."

"Not intruding at all, I assure you. Pray, be seated. I only

came in here to read a letter from my sister, and have just finished it.

"I hope you find her well; and that reminds me that while at Stanwick Manse, as my friend and I were riding out one day, we met your sister and another young lady on horseback. At least Lottie informed me her name was Trevelyan, and, recollecting that as the name of Uncle's student, I supposed her to be your sister."

Claude colored as he thought of Pearl's letter, but not appearing to notice it, Grace continued:

"She is very beautiful and an elegant equestrienne. I almost envy you the possession of such a sister."

How Lottie vanished into insignificance as he stood before this lovely creature and heard her speak with so much respect and admiration of his idolized sister! Here, truly, was genuine nobility of character—one who was an heiress, a beauty, talented and accomplished, not manifesting, by word or deed, that she even thought of the difference in their stations. The tears started in his eyes, and he turned away to conceal his emotion. It was quite a moment before he spoke. Then, with a voice firm as he could command, he said:

"I do, indeed, prize her above everything earthly. With her sisterly love and counsel removed, life would remain to me a mere blank."

Then he started at his own words and turned pale as a statue, for quick as a flash had come the thought that she was not his sister; that perhaps some one, even the sweet girl before him, had more right to call her by that sacred name than himself; and no one could tell at what moment he might be deprived of it all. Oh, what pain the thought gave him! and what would the reality bring! "Oh, my God! spare me this," he breathed from his inmost heart; yet resolving to do his duty though it bring upon him the deepest sorrow of earth. Nothing he had ever passed through, even the occasion of his own father's death, could be compared to this, for she was all, all he had now whose love he could justly claim.

Grace observed his emotion, and crossing over to where he

stood, she said, while a look of compassion beamed from her countenance: "You seem troubled. Perhaps you would not mind telling me the cause, as she is not here—your sister I mean—for sympathy sometimes helps wonderfully to alleviate, you know."

He looked down upon her as she stood partly shaded by the heavy curtain, and replied, while a look of anguish stole into his dark grey eyes: "You are very kind—very kind to offer it to one so unworthy, but I cannot—oh, I cannot tell you. Sometime, perhaps, you may know; but let me assure you that no one is more favored by my confidence in this respect than yourself. None knows but God."

"I am very sorry for you," she said, her dark eyes brimming with tears, "and regret that I can do nothing to lessen your suffering; for I am not so young that sorrow has never visited me. On the contrary, God only knows what grief and agony have been crowded into the last few years of my life, since the death of my angel mother, particularly since my father went away, for then I was left comparatively alone; but God has been a loving Father through all, raised me up kind friends, and life seems more endurable than it once did. Perhaps brighter days will come to you, too, by and by. But Aunt is calling; I must go," she added, as the clear voice of the Doctor's wife rang through the hall, echoing her name.

Claude watched her retreating form, and then, as the ponderous door closed after her, he seated himself in a great easy chair and gave himself once more to his own strange thoughts. He looked down deep into his heart and saw that he had been mistaken; that what he once fancied was love for Lottie had only been a passion of the moment, which her own silly conduct had entirely obliterated. But this deep respect which he felt for Grace Nellisse, this soul attraction, added to every perfection of person and manner which drew him irresistibly towards her, he feared was fast ripening into love, and here the same impediment presented itself that he had met in Lottie's case. Were it not for the education he craved so deeply, he would leave this place forever, ere he learned to love Grace Nellisse; for who

could move within the magic circle of her influence and remain indifferent? Oh, the bitter sting of poverty seemed sometimes more than he could bear. It barred him even from those he loved, besides many enjoyments and privileges he could not help longing for. Yet God knew best. Did he possess wealth perhaps he might become too much absorbed in the affairs of this world and his Heavenly Father too soon be forgotten. Rather than that he would live in extreme poverty all his life. Just at this point the door opened and Paul came in, whistling gaily a snatch of some old song, but seeing Claude, stopped short, removed his hat, made a mock courtesy and said:

"I beg your pardon, old boy. Have I been interrupting one of your reveries? Just like me—always blundering in somewhere and disturbing people."

"I am glad to see you. Sit down and let us enjoy a little chat together—what we have not had since your return," said Claude, drawing a chair near his own. "I suppose you had a charming visit?"

"Yes, indeed. I was never happier in my life, unless I might except those few days at Moss Cottage. Lots of gay girls down there, and little flirtations with the pretty lassies, games at croquet, boating excursions, etc., passed away the time pleasantly, I assure you. By the way, that puts me in mind that I am going down in your vicinity for a few days to sketch a little."

"And you will most certainly make Moss Cottage your home while stopping there?" inquired Claude.

"I had thought some of it, if you think I will not be intruding."

"Never fear. You will be doubly welcome. Pearl will be only too glad to entertain you, for each letter she writes speaks of many lonely hours. How soon do you think of going?"

"I was intending to start immediately, but as I was crossing the hall I met Grace with a letter in her hand, just received, that she informed me was from Lottie Stanwick, stating her intention to visit her. So I suppose I shall have to postpone going for a short time, as Grace will not hear of it now."

This announcement did not affect Claude as it once would have done, except to call a flush of indignation to his brow as

he thought of her conduct towards Pearl, and he regretted that circumstances would oblige him to be again thrown into her society. However, he resolved to shun her as much as possible; and when, the next day, she arrived dressed in the height of style, with haughtiness stamped upon every feature, and affecting a proud and stately gait, he met her with a frigid politeness scarcely equaled by her own. Grace greeted her with a cheering welcome, and the other members of the family with becoming courtesy. Pearl's name was never once breathed during Lottie's stay. Claude felt that it would be almost sacrilege for Lottie to take her name upon her lips, and he spared the proud heiress the mortification which inquiry would surely have caused.

Claude's altered appearance, so freezingly cold and distant, touched a chord of regret in the heart of the haughty girl, but hardly acknowledging it to herself, and divining rightly that he had heard of her dropping his sister's friendship, she crushed it with that indomitable pride of her nature which surmounted every obstacle, and tried to believe herself utterly indifferent to him. But at night, when every one was wrapped in slumber, there would sometimes swell up a cry of longing from her heart for one brotherly, even friendly, word from him such as she used to have; and when he appeared so devoted to Grace, so often seeking her side, turning her music and bestowing upon her various little attentions, her pride almost relented, and she would be on the point of braving anything for one of his long-ago smiles. Then, remembering how far she had carried her scorn—so far as to slight his beloved sister—she was well aware he would not accept her regard now were it offered. Then the love of gold and vain show would serve to still farther strengthen her determination, and she would more firmly resolve that Paul Marshall, with his riches, should be the one she would strive to win. Accordingly every effort was put forth, every little attention paid him, her most bewitching smiles bestowed, and words of approval uttered, at every act of his. And did he perceive all this? Ah, yes; and he did not remain entirely unaffected by it. For, if she chose, Lottie Stanwick could prove

herself most attractive and agreeable. So Paul Marshall learned to like her society, and the moments winged their flight swiftly and pleasantly during her visit. Not that he was in love. No: He had learned merely to like the society of a great many ladies, and passed away many pleasant hours in this manner; but she was too nearly like the majority he had met. He rather preferred a change—some one of more rustic simplicity and careless grace, if he was to fall in love. Besides he had not forgotten the rosy face framed in by golden curls at Moss Cottage, which he hoped soon to meet.

Thus passed the time until the night before Lottie's return home, when a few choice friends were invited in and the evening passed in harmless games, music, amusing conversation and the like, while all seemed to join in the general hilarity except Claude. Somehow it carried him back to the party at Stanwick Manse. What a contrast! Pearl was present then, happy and joyous. Lottie appeared the loving friend of both, while that night had come to him a revelation of something which, thank God, had now entirely passed away. And then, swift as an arrow shot from the bow of memory, came the words spoken by her at the fountain: "I shall always be the same to you, Pearl." Ah! how could he longer believe in friendship! No wonder his sister had lost all faith. And then, what farther increased his sadness, Grace, dressed in simple white, with tuberoses drooping in her hair, moved the center of attraction amid the gay circle, and this seemed to remove her farther still from him and show more vividly the contrast between their stations in life. She looked like a beautiful picture to-night, and wore only one article of jewelry—a golden cross suspended on a chain around her white neck—which rivited Claude's attention from the first.

He was sitting apart from the others when, disengaging herself from the company, she came forward, and taking a seat by his side, said:

"You are very silent, and I fear do not enjoy yourself."

"I must admit, Miss Nellisse, that I feel rather sad to-night, though I see no remedy for it."

"I am very sorry, indeed," she returned, in a tone of sympathy; "but I wish to ask of you one favor. Please be so kind as to call me Miss Nellisse no longer, but Grace. Surely, I think, we have been acquainted long enough to lay aside such freezing formality. Besides, I am but a school-girl yet, you know."

"Certainly; I will do so if it is your wish," he replied, smilingly.

"And now come with me, won't you, please," she continued, coaxingly, "and walk among the flowers in the conservatory. Perhaps they may exert a cheering effect. Paul and Lottie are among the number enjoying their fragrance and beauty."

Claude arose, and, as her white hand touched his arm, a thrill like electricity pervaded his frame, and he knew that in spite of all his struggles to the contrary, he loved Grace Nellisse with a mad passion. They walked amid the intoxicating perfume of the tropic plants, stood where the spray of a silvery fountain dampened the folds of her golden hair, and listened, almost spell-bound, to the bewildering strains of music that came floating in on the sweetly scented air. Suddenly, like a glancing sunbeam, something flashed across the filmy whiteness of her robe and fell with a faint noise at their feet. He stooped, and with a hand almost unsteady, raised the golden cross.

"Allow me," he said, and in the dazzling light read the name, "Grace," finely engraven on its gleaming center. He placed it in her hand, turned white as death and sank into a seat.

"You are not well," she said; "you look pale and almost ill," and with a silver goblet she brought some water, and with her own hand bathed his brow.

"Oh, thank you," said Claude. "Only a slight indisposition. I am better now."

"But where's my cross again? Your strange appearance so frightened me that I must have dropped it the second time. The value isn't so much, but I prize the little jewel for papa's sake. It was his gift. I have worn it since my infancy. Oh, here it is," she added, raising the chain from one of the tendrils of a trailing vine where it had become entangled, and clasped it firmly about her neck.

Claude was almost sure now that Pearl, his sister only in name, was hers by the ties of nature. For the mate to this little chain and cross lay this moment in the rosewood box in his own cottage home. This was very strong proof of her identity, and begging to be excused, and assisted by Grace, who kindly assured the company that he was not well, wished them a pleasant time and retired to spend a restless night.

His thoughts were unsettled. He hardly knew what move to make next, for the crisis must soon come when he could be silent no longer. Duty's call he must obey. God would give him the strength he needed. So, with a firm trust in Him, he finally concluded to wait until they received tidings from Mr. Nellisse, and fell into a troubled slumber just as the faint rays of aurora could be discerned in the eastern sky.

Lottie returned home the next day, and believed that she had gained something toward making a conquest over Paul, for that night he had breathed regret at her early departure, and had promised to call and see her during his stay at Moss Glen. She did not fear Pearl, because Paul Marshall, she was sure, would never marry a penniless orphan, though she almost envied her the pleasure of his agreeable company; but she consoled herself with the hope that he would probably call and see her often, and perhaps spend much of his time at her stately home.

But how does the life of our little heroine pass since the night we left her sleeping so peacefully on the snowy couch in her own little boudoir, after the eventful ride? Not very happily. Life had never seemed so distasteful before. She was almost weary of it; Lottie was her friend no more; Claude was absent; and Paul Marshall had not come as he had promised, and it was now getting late in the season. Oh, if only something would transpire to break this dull monotony!

It was a warm and beautiful day, unusually so for one in November, and she had strolled out to the little nook by the lake to bid it a long farewell till the spring time came again. It had been her favorite retreat since that night when Paul Marshall had there sought her side and breathed those words "which burned within her memory yet." He had said he would

"never forget her, though years on years rolled by." Ah! she feared he had already, as she sat there looking dreamily away on the distant hills, for not one word from him had come, nor had his name even been mentioned in Claude's letters since that night which seemed so long ago.

But hark! Did she hear a footstep? No: It must have been the rustling of the leaves; and with a sigh these words of the poetess came into her mind, and she murmured them aloud:

"There are skies so calm and leaden that we long for storm-winds stirring;
There is peace so cold and bitter that we almost welcome strife."

"How true!" exclaimed a manly voice, and through an archway formed by interlacing boughs above, lightly sprang Paul Marshall. "But you do not mean to say those words apply to you, I hope," he added, as he saw the glad smile which broke over her face like a burst of sunlight dispelling the clouds.

"I thought so just now, for I have been extremely lonely to-day; but I am glad to see you," she said, rising and offering her hand in welcome. He took it and impulsively pressed it to his lips. The hot blood rushed to her face, she drew proudly back and inquired somewhat coldly:

"You left my brother well, I suppose?"

"I did, I am happy to say. I started very abruptly or he would have written a letter;" and then seating himself he related everything concerning her brother which she would be most likely to wish to know; in the meantime Pearl listening very attentively and watching earnestly the changes of his countenance and the penetrating expression of his beautiful eyes, such as she had never seen in any person before.

"And now I suspect you are wondering how I found you here in this little out-of-the-way hiding-place. Your housekeeper told me, on reaching the cottage, that you had gone out for a walk, and something directed me hither. You see I had not forgotten this little enchanted nook, nor the fairy I met here that night in midsummer. Oh, how far away it seems, little girl! I did not think then I should stay from here so long, but, unexpectedly, I accompanied Aunt to Carlton Hall, her brother's country-seat, and on our return Miss Stanwick paid Grace

Nellisse, Uncle's ward, a visit, by which I was necessarily detained, as she insisted on my staying to help entertain her."

Pearl started. Then Lottie had been partially the cause of his absence. *She* had been there with her winning smiles to lure Paul Marshall from her side. She had not dreamed of this. Perhaps she had won his love. But if she had, why was it aught to her? During his stay she would endeavor to make it pleasant and entertaining, and, with all, keep her heart free from the power of love. It was indeed a trying position, continually in the presence of one with Paul Marshall's fascination and unusual manly beauty. Was she equal to the task? But we will pass on.

Pearl was never happier in her life than during Paul Marshall's stay at Moss Cottage. She had basked in the sunshine of his presence, sat like one charmed under the power of his earnest, bewitching eyes and subtle smiles, until she had, unconsciously, given him the whole love of her heart. He had called only once or twice at Stanwick Manse, to Lottie's great discomfort, but the attraction was so much greater in the little white cot by the lake, that what leisure he had he felt must be devoted exclusively to its fair mistress. He wondered somewhat why the two girls never visited each other; yet he thought he could divine the reason, and admired Pearl still more deeply for her persistent silence whenever Miss Stanwick was mentioned. She certainly did not desire to injure her in his estimation, while little insinuations had been several times thrown out by Lottie against Pearl; but this had no effect except to lessen his regard for the former. Lottie was greatly chagrined, as his preference for Pearl was plainly to be observed, while, to our little heroine, it seemed that the whole house had been suddenly transformed into a realm of sunshine and beauty, and Paul Marshall was the prince who wielded the magic wand.

All the surroundings had a charm never known before. The roomy, spare chamber with its curtains of rich damask; its carpet soft and bright; on the wall a few pictures to make it cheerful, and its bed clothed in white, pure and spotless as the snow, seemed to be pervaded with a magic atmosphere, and a

dream-like beauty and warmth unknown before; for it was *his* room, during his stay, and became ever after sacred in the eyes of Pearl. The old harp had been again awakened, and the voice of the little canary chimed more joyously with the music, while Pearl, under Paul Marshall's instruction, proved herself talented and really became quite a musician, which afterward helped in whiling away many lonely hours.

But she knew this must soon end—all this fairy-like existence—and she must again come back to the sad reality, loneliness and monotony. Oh, with what a strange dread did she look forward to the adieux he must utter, and then, perhaps, leave her forever. He had never really spoken of love, but yet she had dared to hope, for she thought his manner, if not his words, had indicated as much.

It was on the morning of his departure. She had thrown her shawl around her and sought the rustic summer-house for a few moments to regain her wonted composure. Until now smiles and ringing laughter had covered the pain at her heart since she knew the time was so near when he must go; but now sobs were convulsing her and blinding tears filled her eyes. Every hope that he loved her had fled. He was going now. Surely he would have spoken ere this! She would not have him see her weakness; so she had come out here, for amidst it all our little friend had acted her part so admirably that Paul Marshall hardly believed she loved him.

This morning the clouds chased each other hurriedly over the sky, the breeze sighed mournfully through the few dead leaves that yet clung to the lower boughs of the trees, the waters had a sad, sobbing sound, and her own heart seemed breaking. Suddenly the wind came with a wilder rush, the grape-vine swung and crackled, and before she was aware of another presence, a hand was laid lightly, softly as a falling leaf, upon the bright folds of her hair, and Paul Marshall was by her side.

"Weeping again, little Pearl? But come with me out of the cold;" and taking her small white hand in his he led her into the library where a bright fire was blazing ready to receive them. "And what am I to think this time? Your brother is

not here now. It surely can not be that my departure is the cause of these tears?"

She looked at him then as he spoke those words—such a look as Paul Marshall never forgot—so full of soul-speaking love and genuine grief. It told more than words to him who was searching so earnestly for the first ray of hope, and sinking at her feet, and fixing his beautiful, searching eyes upon her, he said:

"Pearl, little darling, I have loved you from the first. God knows that these days at Moss Cottage, with your blessed presence, have been the happiest of my life. I thought happiness was mine before, but this has been incomparable bliss—a perfect Eden upon earth. Tell me—tell me—may I dare hope for one return from you for all these hours of waiting and passionate adoration? Can you—will you love me? Will you be my wife?"

She hesitated. A look of unutterable anguish crossed his features.

"Speak, speak I implore you," he pleaded, "and let me know the worst. End this terrible suspense. Must I indeed be exiled from your side and suffer even worse than death? Tell me, if you would not kill me!" he said, rising and walking rapidly to and fro, while great drops of agony stood on his brow and his frame shook with emotion.

She spoke now, with a strange, unnatural calmness, as though she would conceal the anguish gnawing at her heart.

"You forget that simple Pearl Trevelyan is not the accomplished lady Paul Marshall should have to grace the home of wealth and splendor which will undoubtedly be his."

"Accomplishments! What are they to me! Your priceless love is all I ask, for which, if I possessed it, I would not accept the wealth of the Indies. I can never love another. So tell me what will my life be in all the long dreary years to come."

"You would soon forget. Wealth can purchase everything," she said.

"A wife, perhaps," he answered, bitterly, "but not the love

of a true and faithful heart. No: I would cast it all away with contempt for such a treasure as that."

"But I am so young," she pleaded. There was a glad light in the eyes of violet now as she uplifted them to his, at which Paul Marshall caught with eagerness, trying to believe it the consummation of his hopes.

"But I will promise not to call for you in three years from this very month. Will that do? Will you promise now and tell me that you love me? Only make the vow that I may not lose you; that no one, when I am gone, may come and charm the dove away from the home-nest—the beautiful home-nest which her presence makes an Eden."

"I promise," she said, with a blush, and a burst of joyful tears.

"Mine, all mine! Oh! you have made me the happiest of men!" he said, impulsively throwing his arms around her, and imprinting kiss after kiss upon her upturned face; and taking from his finger a ring that had once been his much-loved mother's, placed it upon hers, as he said: "This shall be the seal of our betrothal, and when in our weary separation, during the months to come, you look upon it, my pet, just remember that Paul Marshall is ever true to his promised bride. Remember that. He will never, never change, even though Pearl Trevelyan prove faithless;" and together they sat, until another hour had passed away, dwelling on the happiness which the future would bring to their waiting, anxious hearts.

"And now I must leave you, leave my darling," he said at last, rising to go, "though it is like severing my very heart-strings. Good-bye, good-bye," little pet; and with one long, lingering embrace he was gone.

Oh, how long the hours of that day seemed without him. No one to call her pet names now; no one to come with honeyed words and smiles and winning glances, and no one to charm with his music! The harp was silent now. She had not the heart to wake its echoes. But the sight of the gleaming ruby, the tiny circlet which bound their souls together, had a cheering effect, as she sat alone in the death-like silence where he had left her; the fire dying upon the hearth, and even the canary's

song hushed as though its little heart were throbbing with sympathy for its mistress.

But she had not long to wait alone, for soon after, as she looked out upon the cheerless winter landscape, what was her surprise to see Claude alight from a carriage and come hurriedly up the walk.

After the salutations were over he said: "I have a letter from our Uncle, who is not expected to live, requesting us to come without delay. So let us hasten, for there may be something of importance to communicate."

Not much was talked of during the hurried preparation, both reserving their thoughts until a more suitable time; and the following morning found them on their journey to L——.

CHAPTER VI.

"Nothing can we call our own, but Death,
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones."
—*Shakespeare.*

It was a strange night. No moon; no little star-lamps were lit in the dark-shrouded night-sky, but inky clouds flew like black-winged demons through the illimitable space, and the wind went shrieking and moaning along the broad, village streets, and round a dark, stately mansion, within which the scene strangely accorded with the rage of the elements, for around the death-bed of husband and father friends were grouped; among whom we behold Claude and Pearl, who had arrived shortly before and quickly hastened to hear the words of the dying man. He requested to be left a few moments alone with them, and taking the hand of each he said, while tears rained from his eyes and dropped upon the spotless pillow:

"And here are my brother's children. Oh, my heart bleeds when I think of the almost unpardonable sin I have committed.

But I trust God has forgiven me, and through Him I was led to fully repent and believe. You are the very picture of your father, Claude, as I remember him, though it has been many a long, long year. I can almost believe he stands before me now. You doubtless know your father's history far better than I can tell you, and what estranged us who had once been such loving brothers. The part of the property which should have been his was bequeathed to me, and I, in my selfishness, kept it in my possession, while my poor brother became a victim to ill-health and almost poverty. No wonder he lost all love for one who appeared so utterly heartless, and remorse of conscience since his death has done much towards bringing me where I am. I could not die a peaceful death until a confession was made to his orphan children, because they are all that is left which are near and dear to him. In my last testament you will find each a share which I hope will, in some measure, compensate for my selfish conduct. Did you ever receive three hundred dollars in a letter?"

"We did," said Claude, "and could not tell who was the kind donor. It came just in the time of our extremity and did much real good for us."

"Thank God! It was payed to me unexpectedly, and thinking the small sum might help you a little, at least, I enclosed it in a letter and sent it."

"We sincerely thank you," said Claude, mingling his tears with Pearl's, "and, my dear uncle, I can truly say, that were my father here, I am sure you would be freely forgiven. I know that on the other shore he is waiting now to welcome his only brother."

A smile played over the features of the dying man and then came an ashy paleness, and a stone-like glitter of the eyes, and Claude, stepping to the door, summoned the family. An effort to speak, which ended in a whisper, "good-bye," a gasp, and the once proud owner of all this grandeur by which they were surrounded was no more, showing that all, both high and low, rich and poor, must at last reach the same sad end.

The family were almost inconsolable, mourning, indeed, like

those without hope. The burial services were conducted with splendor, and Pearl could not help thinking, as they placed the elegant coffin in the family vault, how vain are all things earthly, and particularly on a solemn occasion like the present, when all fashion and formality should be laid aside, and heed given to the warning voice of God.

After the interment Pearl had ample time to look around and study the characters of those about her. There was their Uncle's wife, who had not a very prepossessing countenance, and who wore a haughty, aristocratic air; her eldest daughter, Genevieve, very much like her mother in looks and demeanor; then Lulu, fair and beautiful, a tinge of pride in her manner, yet withal, very loving and affectionate; and lastly, the son Charles, handsome and intelligent, rather short of stature, with black hair and eyes, and of a rather gay and reckless disposition. They were very kind to the brother and sister, and when, in a few days after, the will was found to leave them quite a little fortune, the family readily and cheerfully acquiesced, knowing it to be the request of the dying; and, as the time arrived when Claude and Pearl—much to the regret of all—started home, it was arranged that the latter should return as soon as possible in order to attend the next term of school.

Claude remained at Moss Cottage for a few days of rest until Pearl's departure, and, as might be supposed, they were very thankful that their Uncle had so kindly remembered them. They regarded the bequest as a gift sent from God.

As Pearl was very busy making preparations little visiting was done, but she found time to narrate the adventure which Ellen met with during the berry ramble, their strange visit to the haunted house, and lastly, her betrothal to Paul Marshall. Claude listened stricken almost dumb with wonder and surprise. It was all so unexpected, and a nameless fear possessed him. Who could this weird woman be? How did she know aught of his sister and himself? And the portrait which resembled Pearl—who was its original? It was certainly a mystery—all a mystery. Perhaps the woman was acquainted with the whole circumstance in some inexplicable manner, and ere he was

aware, his beloved sister might be snatched from him and doomed, no one knew to what a fate. But her betrothal—he could bear this better than the other, for she had said three years must pass ere Paul Marshall would come and claim her for his bride, and in that time God only knew what events might transpire. Meanwhile, Ellen assisted in the preparations, and when, at last, her young mistress started the second time on her journey, cried like a very child. Although the distance would necessarily separate them for a longer time than before, Claude was glad of the opportunity for Pearl to attain an education, and in this he found consolation; and our little heroine, although she loved her home and its surroundings, which were now more than ever endeared to her by new ties of affection, felt that her thirst for knowledge could now be fully satisfied, and there would come also a cessation of the lonely hours which she knew Claude's departure must bring. So with a fond adieu they parted—his destination being Dr. Norton's city home, hers, the Trevelyan mansion in L——.

All greeted her kindly, Lulu particularly, with much affection, and Charles, something like his sister, with a sincere and hearty welcome, these latter directly winning her regard. She was immediately shown to her room for the purpose of changing her traveling garb for one more suitable, of soft crimson merino. It was a fairy-like nook, with a carpet into which the feet would sink, a couch of down and snow curtains of lace, an elaborate dressing table, and, in fact, every elegant appointment of a lady's boudoir. She hoped to be happy here, for the surroundings were beautiful, and she resolved that on her part every effort should be made to win the love of her uncle's family, as she fully appreciated their kindness, and desired to make it apparent by her conduct toward them while an inmate of their elegant home. Soon tea was announced, and as they sat before the sumptuous repast in the spacious dining-room, Charles said:

“Well, Gene, when is that school-friend of yours, Miss Stanwick, to make her advent here? She has such haughty, disagreeable ways, for my part I wish you had never invited her.”

Pearl's heart gave a great bound at the thought of coming

into such close proximity to Lottie, but when Genevieve spoke she felt somewhat relieved.

"For shame! to talk so of my dear friend! She only has the dignity suitable to her rank. However, Mr. Faultfinder, I had a letter from her last night and she informs me that cousins of hers, a young lady and her brother from N——, where Miss Nellisse resides, are to attend school here and they have decided to board at the Hall. So set yourself at rest."

"Capital! capital! I know cousin Pearl wouldn't like her; I'm sure I can't, and Lulu don't fall down and worship her as you do."

"Mama, can't he stop being so impertinent?"

"Charles, Charles; you should have more regard for your sister's feelings," said his mother, rebukingly. "Lottie Stanwick is an estimable young lady. I'm very much pleased that Genevieve has found such a friend, and am exceedingly sorry that this term does not find her with us."

"Come Lu., what have you to say?" said Charles, turning to her as his advocate.

"Not much, except that I should greatly prefer the friendship of that amiable Miss Nellisse, Lottie's room-mate, who graduated last term. Do you know, I think cousin Pearl bears a striking resemblance to her?"

All agreed that she was correct; that their general form and expression were greatly similar, but not one dreamed of her acquaintance with Lottie—nor that she had seen Grace Nellisse, and her name had become so pleasantly familiar through one she loved better than life itself. Once she would have enjoyed nothing better than to have attended school here with Lottie; but alas! how great the change! Now she regretted it, and looked forward with dread to their coming meeting. But, at all events, she would appear towards her as a true Christian should, though she received evil returns. This required a struggle. The tempter whispered: Evil for evil. She has slighted you in the past, and when the opportunity offers, scorn her as once she scorned her early friend. Then conscience would whisper: No. Then again the tempter: She will say you are begging

for her friendship if you do not show that you have not forgotten the past. But "a still, small voice" again echoed: No; and hour after hour silent petitions went up to heaven that God would direct her conduct towards Lottie, and guide her in the path of right and duty. Her whole trust was in Him, and she believed that through all temptation and trial He would at last bring her off conqueror.

The following day they met. The family were sitting in the drawing-room, when two stately young ladies, the very embodiment of fashion and vanity, were ushered into their presence. One was immediately recognized as Lottie, and the other she presented as her cousin, Miss Lee. The greeting by each member of the family was exceedingly cordial, except on the part of Charles, who merely extended a freezing bow. Then followed a formal introduction to Pearl. Lottie looked disconcerted for a moment, in her surprise at seeing the one she had so improperly used, not having before noticed her presence; but, recovering herself, she extended her hand with a slight degree of warmth, and said, partly with a smile:

"I believe I have met Miss Trevelyan before."

Pearl returned the greeting cordially; and, as no one seemed to notice the remark except, as Pearl thought, quick-witted Charles, no questions were asked, and the evening passed with less embarrassment than she had expected.

School soon opened, and Pearl, finding the preceptress a kind and gentle lady, apparently, at least, and the majority of the pupils affable, concluded that boarding-school life would prove quite enjoyable. Genevieve and Lottie were fast friends; and Lulu, whose heart Pearl had quite won, clung to her with remarkable affection, which pleased Pearl, who hoped to exert a good influence over her as well as Charles, who showed his high regard for her by many little acts and words of kindness. But, what pained her most, and seemed to be the only real blemish upon his character, she had several times detected on his breath the fumes of wine. Oh, what a pity, she thought, that one so young, so intelligent, so promising, should begin thus early to partake of the intoxicating cup! But she prayed

for him nightly, and resolved, at the first opportunity, to point out the extreme folly of his course. Accordingly, as he came in one evening, his face flushed, his eye bright, and his step almost unsteady, where Pearl was sitting alone in a deep reverie, the bright firelight casting fitful shadows on the wall and illuminating the room so that a lamp was scarcely necessary, she said:

"You have been out to-night, Charlie?"

"Yes, Pearl, for a short time."

"But where?" she quizzed; and he hesitated. "You surely would not mind telling me?" she continued, kindly.

"Only down to the Central Hotel, cousin."

"Business then, I suppose?" she inquired again. "You may think I am rather inquisitive, but it is hardly the place for a young man unless called by something of importance."

She could see his face flush still more in the flickering firelight as he forced himself to answer:

"I must confess, Pearl, that not business but a want of diversion caused me to seek that place."

"I am sorry, Charlie. They drink wine there, do they not, and gamble?"

"Those who choose can do so," he replied.

"But you do not?" she queried.

"I have never gambled in my life, dear cousin."

"But am I to understand that you do not abstain from drink?"

"Certainly, I take a glass of wine, sometimes."

"But do you see no harm in it?"

"None, whatever."

"But where is the advantage derived?"

"It gratifies the taste and is exhilarating."

"Each a pleasing sensation that soon passes away, and then one is worse off; oh, how much worse off, than before! Oh, what folly! Can you not see it, cousin Charlie?"

"But I never drink to excess."

"Do you consider your example nothing? Do you not wield an influence? Every one does, either for good or evil, and this certainly cannot be on the side of right. You know not what

good you might do by totally abstaining from drink. How many of your young companions might be led to follow your example! Besides, what leads to intoxication? If the first glass were not taken, surely there could be no drunkards in this world, and the more taken the greater the appetite, until the moderate drinker, before he knows it, is drawn into the whirling vortex of intemperance and sinks forever beneath its fiery waves."

"But there are many church members who take their glass frequently."

"That may be, Charles; but remember the sins of others will not excuse us in the day of judgment. And then, again, you see the force of example. Oh, if all could fully realize the many downward steps they are causing others to take, methinks they would pause in their onward course of wrong."

"Quite a temperance lecturer, little coz. But it is all good advice, I must admit, and I will promise you to think it over."

"Thank you, Charlie. I really hope you will do so, and come to a right conclusion;" and so they parted for the night, he to dream over the words of Pearl, which continually sounded in his ear, and she to pray that they might have the desired effect. So the days passed away, the smell of wine on his breath was not so frequent, yet Pearl could see that he did not follow the only safe course—total abstinence—as she had hoped. Nevertheless, her faith did not waver and she did not stop praying nightly for the wayward, yet generous-hearted boy.

Letters came often from Claude and Paul, always full of love and hope and longings to meet her again, which cheered the hours and gave her great cause to be thankful for friends so kind and loving. Lulu and Charles spent much of their time with her, Mrs. Trevelyan showed no lack of attention, while of Genevieve she saw but little, as her intimacy with Lottie took her much from home, and Pearl sometimes fancied the two girls, for some reason, sought to shun her; but not to be brought into contact with Lottie pleased her rather than otherwise. Her presence caused unpleasant feelings, for, although the wound was nearly healed, the scar remained and Pearl could not quite for-

get, though the remembrance of their friendship seemed to have passed forever from the haughty girl's mind.

In this manner, without anything of note transpiring, the term passed away until the summer vacation, which Pearl was going to spend at Moss Cottage, Lulu and Charles bearing her company, while Lottie, Genevieve and Mrs. Trevelyan went to the mountains and watering places.

The two young gentlemen came down from the city, accompanied by Miss Nellisse, who declared she was going to see that charming little nook which Paul had sketched so beautifully. Pearl was highly pleased to meet her, and the two girls, from the first, seemed to be drawn towards each other by some irresistible attraction. Each one of the company remarked their striking resemblance to each other; and Clara, whose every leisure moment, according to Pearl's wish, was spent with the little party, said one day, startling Claude strangely:

"Why, really, you look near enough alike to be sisters."

"I'm sure I shouldn't object," said Pearl, smiling and throwing her arms around the slender form of Grace, who blushed red as scarlet as she thought of only one possible way to become so.

Claude Trevelyan had never spoken of love, although he could not entirely conceal it from her intuitive faculties. She knew too well the reason, and sometimes almost longed to have the power to speak. He believed her not wholly indifferent, but until he was sure of success in his profession he dare not broach the subject, and his only fears were that, ere that time, some other one might win her priceless love. Had he known the true feelings of her heart it might have been different; but no, it was veiled from him like many a truth that would make us the happier if we were only in possession of it.

Paul was as devoted as ever; he and Charles, in the meantime, becoming fast friends, while the latter really fell in love with charming Clara.

Another picnic was enjoyed in the mountain grove, and with sails on the lake, walks and rides, all averred that they had spent a very happy season. When they parted Grace gained a

promise from Pearl that the next vacation away from her Aunt's should be spent at Dr. Norton's. Invitations to visit L—— were extended to each one, while Paul Marshall whispered gaily: "You may be sure I shall avail myself of the opportunity if my bonnie Pearl is anywhere within its limits," giving her hand such a squeeze she could hardly suppress a cry.

A few weeks passed away after their return to L——, when, one night quite late, as Pearl sat in her room, the door slightly ajar, the figure of a man staggered past along the hall, and rising, her heart beating wildly, she reached the entrance just in time to see that it was Charles intoxicated. She had wondered what kept him so late, and Lulu, who had left her presence a few moments before, expressed fears that something had befallen him, as so late an hour, recently, was unusual. Both had their secret thoughts, but neither expressed them to the other, and as Pearl turned to close the door, grieved and sick at heart that her entreaties had been in vain, she heard footsteps, and in a moment more, Lulu, pale and trembling, entered, and sinking into a chair, burst into tears.

"Oh, Pearl, I saw him—I saw him. I was returning from the basement with some water, when he passed through the dining-room, reeling and stumbling at every step. I was so frightened I did not let him see me, but as soon as he passed on I hurried as fast as I could to your room. Oh, we must not let mama know of this. It would kill her."

"You are right, Lulu, dear. It would but increase her sorrow. There is only one thing we can do for him, and that is, pray that God would help him not to yield to the fatal tempter."

Lulu looked up rather surprised at this proposal, unused to it as she was, never having been taught by her fashionable, aristocratic mother this most important of all duties; but rising she reverently kneeled beside Pearl, who poured out a fervent prayer for her erring brother; and when they arose, for some reason hardly known to herself, she felt a great burden removed from her mind. She could not help thinking that such a heartfelt prayer from one so good as she believed cousin Pearl, would be answered.

The following morning it happened that Mrs. Trevelyan was detained in her room with a severe attack of head-ache. Genevieve was not at home, having spent the night with Lottie. Therefore no one knew of the state in which Charles returned home except Pearl and Lulu. He arose early next morning, Pearl heard his footsteps as he passed her room, and after a rather lengthy walk he returned just in time for the morning meal, almost himself again. But he looked sad and harrassed, saying but very little to any one. Pearl pitied him deeply, for she knew by his manner that he was truly repentant for the last night's dissipation. So when he took a book and went off by himself to read, she sought his side, and laying her hand on his shoulder softly spoke his name, "Charlie."

He looked up and tears were in his eyes: "Ah, I know you saw it all, cousin—saw me in that dreadful state last night, and my head is bowed with shame. I wonder how you deign to speak to me again since I disgraced you all."

"I come not to reproach," she uttered, "but to give you my entire sympathy. You mother and Genevieve know it not, I am happy to say. This is the first time, I believe?"

"Yes, yes, thank God! But if I had only heeded your advice this might never have been. They gave me wine till my head began to whirl, and then I cared for nothing—forgot all, in the mad excitement liquor had kindled in my brain. Oh, oh! I see what it leads to. Your words have come true. I thought I possessed perfect control over myself, and could go just so far and no farther. But I got too near the maelstrom and it drew me into its destructive circle; and now, cousin Pearl, your hand is every thing I have to cling to that I may be kept from this worst of all evils."

"I will do all I can for you, but there is another, you know, greater than I, who 'is an ever present help in time of trouble.' He will deliver you. Trust in Him. I have prayed for you daily. Pray for yourself. Promise me."

"I will. He is the God my dear father trusted in during the last year or two of his life, and such a permanent change in any

one I never saw. I have often thought there must be great reality in religion to effect such an alteration."

"Yes, oh, yes, dear Charlie, there is great power in religion. And will you promise me to abstain from drink entirely, by the help of God?"

"I do most gladly and willingly. I find it is the only *safe* way;" and, indeed, after this conversation, Charlie seemed a changed boy, many observing and remarking it. Pearl and Lulu hardly regretted that one night of dissipation, as it had proved the lesson, necessary although hard, to show him the folly of intemperance. His evenings were spent at home thenceforward, and his mother and Genevieve were at a loss to interpret the great change, but never knew the cause until a long time afterward.

One winter's evening Lottie had stepped in, and they were all sitting around the brightly illuminated room, when Charles entered, saying, "News for you, girls. Paul Marshall is in town."

All eyes, except Lottie's, were rivited instantly upon Pearl, who turned white and red by turns. That young lady, rising with a dignified gesture, said: "The rich and distinguished Mr. Marshall, Dr. Norton's nephew, you have heard spoken of so often, Genevieve."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed the latter, with delight.

"You met him with cousin Henry, I suppose, as he is a very intimate friend of his," inquired Lottie, eagerly.

"No: with the artist, Mr. Belknap," answered Charles, a little sharply.

"I did not know of their acquaintance. However, I shall have to bid you good-night, or the preceptress will put on one of her sweet looks, I fear;" and with an affected little laugh she swept out.

"A perfect bundle of vanity," said Charles. "However, she isn't worth talking about," not appearing to notice the withering look which Genevieve cast upon him. "I was going to tell you before, little coz, had it not been for that chatterbox, that he

is coming to visit us before his return. He inquired about you very interestedly, too; and little Lu, here, I believe he mentioned."

So Pearl had a light heart that night. Everything around her seemed to possess a new attraction. The stars shone with an added lustre as she gazed from the window where she had seated herself to dream, and the wind through the naked boughs of the tree which shadowed it had a sound like music, when so many times before she had thought it sad and mournful. What joy will not the presence of a loved one bring, and when gone what a sacred memory entwines each spot their presence has blessed.

The next evening came and Pearl was left alone, for the family had gone to a concert; and although they urged her repeatedly to accompany them, she declined, feeling unusually weary; and so, in the library, in the great crimson-cushioned chair, with the lamp turned down so as to cast a soft twilight over the room, she was lounging greatly at her ease, when a quick ring at the door bell caused her to spring to her feet. As the servant was below she attended the door herself, when before her, in the dim star-light without, stood Paul Marshall. She uttered a cry of joy, and in a moment more was clasped to his true and noble heart.

"I knew you were alone; Charlie told me so—just the way I wanted to meet, my darling, away from the gaze of curious eyes," he said, as they entered the library, where they sat down side by side, renewing their vows of love, and talking over their projects for the future.

Thus another happy evening of Pearl's life vanished into the never-returning past. Oh, how many times in the sunless future did she long for even one hour such as this.

Two weeks passed away and Paul Marshall still lingered. Most of his time was spent in Pearl's society, yet all the arts and wiles of Miss Stanwick were brought into play to win him from her side and gain his affections; but to her extreme mortification they once more proved in vain.

CHAPTER VII.

“Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet, with my nobler Reason, against my Fury,
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In Virtue than in Vengeance.”

It is near the close of the second year of Pearl's boarding-school life, which has become almost as monotonous as those days which seemed so long ago spent at home; very little of interest occurring, and she longs for the change which the fulfilment of her promise to Grace will bring; for the term has nearly closed, and a letter has already carried the news of her intended visit to the inmates of Dr. Norton's mansion. She is very busy just now trying to finish a fine landscape painting. The teacher had promised a prize to the pupil who displayed the best artistic talent, and great hope that she might be the favored one had inspired her with new vigor, for Charles and Lulu, and even Genevieve, had remarked that it was the best they had seen, and no doubt the prize would be hers.

Just a stroke or two more—a dash of sunlight here and a little darker tint where that slight shadow falls upon the water, and it is finished. So taking it from the easel she hastened to the school-room, and finding no teacher there, placed the painting carefully on the desk and went to seek her. She proved to be assisting one of the scholars in solving an arithmetical problem, and it was fully twenty minutes before they returned to the school-room, when, behold! the first sight that met their eyes was the contents of an ink-bottle which had capsized, completely disfiguring the whole beautiful picture.

Pearl burst into tears: “Oh, Miss Beaumont, who could have done this mischief? It is too bad—too bad, when for weeks all my spare time I have worked so diligently to finish it.”

“I can not tell, I am sure; but I will know if it is within the limits of possibility,” replied the teacher, while a frown darkened her brow. “It certainly could not have capsized without hands. Have you no enemies among the scholars?”

Pearl in a moment thought of Lottie, but, hardly believing one so proud would stoop to so low an act, said: "None, I hope, that would purposely do such a thing."

"I am very sorry, Pearl; and if I had only seen it before it was so badly defaced, and it had proved the best, the prize should have been yours. But I shall make inquiries, and if it lies in my power, find out the transgressor, and he shall receive a severe punishment." Then Pearl, rising, took the picture and left the room.

As she crossed the passage and descended the stairs, Lulu, her brow flushed with indignation, came bounding forward, exclaiming, "Oh, there you are. I have been seeking you this last twenty minutes, since I saw Lottie Stanwick perform that contemptible act in the school-room."

"Lottie Stanwick?" repeated Pearl.

"Yes: Lottie Stanwick. I know all about it; for the door stood slightly ajar, and as I was passing I saw her pour the ink over your sweet picture, and then place the bottle so as to cause any one to think it had capsized. I did not know whose painting it was; but stopping in the next room until she had passed out and down the stairs, I entered and found it to be yours. Then I ran to seek you. I always thought she was a very wicked girl. I'll run right up and tell Miss Beaumont."

"No, no, Lulu, dear; although it grieves me very much—" here a great sob prevented her speaking for a moment—"yet it will give me no pleasure to see her punished. So I entreat you not to betray her. You haven't mentioned it to any person, have you?"

"No. But it is a shame for such a proud girl to go unpunished."

"You will promise not to breathe it to any one, dear Lulu, for my sake?"

"Yes, certainly, if you wish it; but how am I to avoid being quizzed?"

"Kind Providence will assist us in that matter, I trust;" and fortunately the next day Lulu happened to be detained at home with a violent head-ache.

Earnest inquiries were made in each department, requesting all who knew nothing about the affair to stand upon their feet, which all did, Lottie included, though her face turned as red as scarlet. Pearl was purposely late, for she felt she could not sit still and act a lie, while Genevieve unconsciously saved Lulu, for notice being taken of her absence she was questioned, when she answered quickly and innocently, supposing naturally if her sister had known she would have mentioned it to her: "Lulu is home sick, and knows nothing about it."

So the subject was dropped. But the wicked girl was disappointed in winning the prize, for Charles was the favored one, and received a very elegantly bound Bible, filled with beautiful engravings; and when our little heroine saw it she thanked God in her inmost heart that he had received not only the prize, but "the pearl of great price," and believed that all had happened for the best.

School closed, and that day there came a letter from Grace saying that Dr. Norton's carriage would meet Pearl at Moss Glen, in order that her ride should be less fatiguing. The preliminaries for her journey were gone through with, and, seating herself in the great lumbering stage-coach, in a few hours reached Moss Cottage, her own loved home.

Anthony and Ellen almost went into ecstasies at seeing their young mistress again, and the sight of their dear, kind, old faces was refreshing to Pearl, who had been so long among strangers, for she felt that indeed their hearts, at least, beat in genuine love and sympathy with hers as well as her beloved brother's.

Clara, whom she longed so to see, was away for a few days on a visit—so Ellen informed her. Each room had a dear, familiar look. Her own little boudoir, with its snowy couch and curtains, and the library with its deep bay-window, were the same. Even the golden canary still hung in its accustomed place, and the dear, old harp, too, stood there in its cozy nook, and, approaching, she swept its cords with a few joyful strains. Then breaking into a song full of hope and love, woke the house with glad echoes, bringing Ellen's jolly old face to the door, where she listened like one spell-bound. But just as her voice

soared the highest, quivering on the air like that of a bird, just as the music of the harp rang out the most joyous, one of the strings snapped asunder. A tremor passed over Pearl in spite of herself, and the old woman, shaking her head, remarked:

“Bad omen, bad omen, my dear, to have the chord break when ye war playing such cheering music. It seems that when we are the happiest there will always something come to spoil it all.”

Pearl never allowed signs and omens to trouble her, but somehow this did seem ominous, while the old woman's words served to increase the feeling of fear and dread which seemed to have settled upon her; but striving to look upon it only as an accidental occurrence, she swept the yet unbroken chords. This time the music sounded wild and strange, and, with broken spirits, after a few moments she placed it again in its accustomed nook.

“How ye can play, Missy Pearl; sure goin' off to school is goin' to make a 'complished lady of ye. An' how much longer is it afore ye finish?”

“Only one year, aunty.”

“Oh, well, it won't be a great while then that Anthony and myself 'll have to stay here alone. The days seem long without ye're or Masther Claude's bright faces, and now ye're goin' right on to-morrow. Law, ye won't be with us at all, at all.”

“You know I must fulfill the promise made so long ago. I should dearly love to stay here for at least a week, but it is now too late. I have just been thinking how nicely every article is kept just as it used to be.”

“Yes, Missy. I have kept every thing as near as I could as ye're dear hands put it—placing every thing in the morning as though ye were coming at night, so the old place would look the same as ever.”

“You are very kind, aunty,” said Pearl, the tears coming into her expressive eyes as she thought of the old woman's love and devotion.

Somehow she felt weary of the world and longed for the quiet of home once more. She wished to see those she loved, but if they would only come and spend the time at Moss Cottage,

she was sure more enjoyment would be hers. But she was going to visit the abode of wealth and grandeur again, which she had so long reveled in at her Aunt's, and she longed for the simplicity and home-like air of Moss Cottage. But when the carriage, the next morning, rolled up to the door, and Paul alighted and ran in to escort her out, she thought it was not so bad after all and very much enjoyed the ride, as every moment was occupied in talking of the past, present and future. Only one year now and she would be all his, and the joyous sunshine of love and hope shone round their hearts, illuminating the flowery path which lay between the now and then, transforming the latter into a realm of light and bliss. She gave herself up to the full enjoyment of his loving presence, when suddenly the remembrance of the severed harp-chord and Ellen's words passed through her mind: "When we are the happiest there will something come to spoil it all," and a dark shadow for a moment obscured the sunshine. She gave a deep sigh, which Paul observed, kindly asking the cause: "You appeared so happy but a moment ago, darling. Surely nothing could have occurred within the boundaries of the carriage to bring this cloud of sadness?"

"No, no, dear Paul! I was only thinking of a circumstance which occurred yesterday and the words of Ellen, although I never allow such trivial things to affect me; yet in spite of myself I can not entirely forget this;" and she related it to Paul.

"Never fear, never fear, little darling; nothing shall—nothing can—come to mar our happiness. We will ever be true to each other, and remember that

‘Nothing but death our affection can sever;’

then in the other world we shall be united again, where, indeed, our bliss will be complete."

These cheering words silenced her fears for the time, at least, and when the carriage rolled up in front of the imposing mansion of Dr. Norton, the ride had not been half long enough to the happy inmates. She was greeted with much affection by all, even to roguish Harry, who clung about her, and Belle, who covered her face with kisses, exclaiming, "Why, you look just

like dear Grace;" and as they heard the remark the Doctor said:

"There is indeed a marked resemblance between them, which struck me at the first glance."

Claude colored and turned quickly around to speak to Paul on some subject of no importance, while the two girls looked at each other, exchanging smiles, their thoughts evidently reverting back to the words of Clara that day at Moss Cottage.

Everything was done to promote Pearl's comfort and happiness during her stay. The picture gallery proving her especial delight, and the conservatory, library and music-room great sources of pleasure.

One uncommonly warm, pleasant day, the family carriage was ordered and all went to ride in the park. Pearl was enraptured with the new sights that met her eye, and Grace proposed that they should spend a little time in strolling about at will. A large number were present to-day improving the fine weather, and the figure of a woman dressed in black, coming towards them strangely, attracted the attention of the two girls, who had strayed off together, locked arm in arm. As she came nearer, her glittering steel-black eyes turned full upon them, a tremor passed through the frame of each, and a deathly pallor overspread Pearl's countenance, as the woman soliloquized, through her clenched teeth, though loud enough to reach the ears of the two girls:

"Merciful Heaven! and there they are together at last!"

"We must have been the ones she meant," said Grace. "There is no one else near just now, and she so closely scrutinized us both."

"Yes, yes," said Pearl, "I know it; I have seen her before."

"But you look as though you were faint and frightened, too," said Grace, noticing her pale face. "Let us sit down here, and then tell me, please, where you have seen this weird woman."

The rustic seat looked inviting, and as no one happened to be near, Pearl related to her the whole story of the ride and visit to the haunted house, on the evening when they first saw

each other, and also Ellen's meeting with this same strange personage. Grace listened with interest, then said:

"There is some great mystery in this, or the woman is crazed. The latter I shall believe, for she never could have seen me before, I'm certain, though she spoke just now as though she had, for she is a person one could not forget soon."

"Yes," said Pearl, tremblingly, "but we won't tell Claude of this; it would only cause him needless anxiety."

"You are right, dear Pearl. We will mention it to no one at present."

Just then the young gentlemen came up, and after a few moments of conversation, the carriage with the Doctor's family came along, when they entered and were whirled rapidly home.

"I fear something troubles you, dear brother," said Pearl, as they were left alone in the drawing-room after tea. "You seem so depressed; not like yourself at all."

"Oh, I have perplexities like every one else, little sister."

"But I fear there is something unusual. I wish to share in all your trials, which, I feel, should be my privilege."

Oh, how he longed to pour out his heart to her then, and relieve himself of this dreadful burden; but he must not—no, he could not—in a moment dash all the joy out of that young heart, extinguish all the light and hope that had found a place there, so with a forced smile, he said:

"Perhaps it is but your fancy. If I am changed, hard study and deep thought may have effected a slight alteration."

"I sincerely hope there is nothing farther. When do you go to college?"

"Very soon now. Doctor says my advancement has been rapid, owing much to the studies heretofore pursued at home."

"I am really glad you are so far advanced, but I cannot help thinking that we shall be farther apart than ever."

"Yes, dear Pearl, we shall, indeed," said Claude, with a sigh, inquiring within himself if some day it would not be still farther.

"But instead of repining," Pearl continued, "how thankful we should be to God for His manifold blessings and mercy. Think, dear brother, of that day so many months ago, when

that precious burst of sunshine came to our heavy hearts in the disguise of a letter. Even *you* had lost all hope then, and grown faint and weary. Those were dark days, Claude. When my own heart was bleeding I strove to hold out the lamp of hope to you, although in my own hand it faintly flickered, and that morning its light had almost vanished amid the thick clouds of despair; but behold! where are they scattered! To be sure they flit now and then across our pathway, but how few in comparison to the blessings God has continually showered upon us *since* that day."

"Yes, Pearl, we have great reason to be thankful, I am sure; but you know sometimes, when we hardly know it, clouds hover round, and ere we are aware the storm bursts suddenly and pitilessly upon us."

"Yes, brother; but how strangely you talk. No such storms will burst on us, I hope. Do you fear so?"

"I hope otherwise, sister; but let us not feel ourselves too secure."

Just then the servant came in to light the lamps, interrupting their conversation, and a moment after Grace and Paul made their appearance, so the subject was dropped. But Pearl could not help wondering at the change in her brother. To find his habitual cheerfulness changed to sadness and dejection, just as he was about to enter upon a college life, which he had so greatly anticipated, filled her with apprehension of coming sorrow. Claude, perceiving that his depression had a saddening effect upon his sister, strove to appear his natural self once more, and succeeded so far as to disperse her fears and bring back the merriment and hilarity which had become habitual to her since released from the confinement of school.

So time passed away in its usual routine until the afternoon immediately preceding the day of her departure. Wishing to visit the picture gallery once more, she wended her way thither alone. There hung the portraits of the family; then Grace's, beautiful in its graceful drapery, a few German and Italian paintings, and some of our own sublime American scenery, among which was suspended a sketch of her dearly loved home—Moss

Cottage. A few steps in advance and what meets her eye? The picture of a young girl, robed in white, sitting on the bank of a moonlit lake, an arch-work of dark green leaves above, and a tiny boat rocking idly at her feet. A picture of herself on that well-remembered night, and well did she know who was the artist. The face was sad but he had left out the tears.

"Ha, ha!" laughed a voice in the door-way. "Isn't that a charming mirror, Pearl? Do you not see a reflection of yourself?"

"I think I do, and a very correct one, I should judge," she replied, laughing and blushing at the same time; "though I can hardly say I am in the same place or position at present. Pray tell me, why have I not seen this before?"

"For the reason that it is only just completed. I thought I would give you a little surprise, and when you are gone I shall still have that sweet face before me. But it must not remain here for other eyes to gaze upon. Come with me and we will together place it where it shall be my guardian angel during my dreams by night and day;" and leading her into a large, nicely furnished room adjoining his studio, containing a couch draped in snowy white, he placed it where, in the early morning, his eyes would fall upon it when he awoke; then drawing her to a seat near the window, he said:

"To-morrow you leave us. Oh, the house will be like a tomb when you are gone. You should never more leave me were it not for that other year at school. I would claim you now for my own little treasure of a wife. I have hardly the courage to meet the long days and months that must intervene without you; but I am making you gloomy."

"Not your words alone, dear Paul; but I have been thinking: what if we should never meet again, and all the bright hopes of the present vanish amid the darkness of the untried future? What if aught should transpire to separate us, would you forget these happy hours and the one who has spent them with you?"

"Forget? no, never, my darling, till the sun forgets to shine and the flowers to bloom. Oh, if you knew the depth of love within my heart you would never speak the word *forget!* And

here again I vow before you, that let come what will, even a final separation, Paul Marshall will ever be true to his early love." He said this kneeling at her feet, while his beautiful eyes spoke volumes he could not utter. "The ruby still gleams upon your finger, my darling," he continued, "and while you retain it uncalled for, remember I am yet *unchanged*. I shall ever remain the same, even though Pearl Trevelyan prove false. It shall never be removed by any request of mine until death seals my lips forever; but I know you will ever be to me the same true-hearted little girl. Say 'yes,' just once, here in the twilight, won't you?" and his blue eyes seemed searching her very soul, so earnest and penetrating were they.

"Yes, yes; forever, forever!" she murmured.

"But do not let such sad forbodings fill your mind, my darling, as there did just now. I know, I feel that we shall walk the flowery path of life together. Should it be otherwise, I would not care to live;" and then rising they went down—down where other eyes could meet theirs, and other lips murmur words which fell with little meaning, as they sat dreaming over again the vows just spoken, and looking forward with dread to the morrow's separation.

A gloom seemed to hang over the place when our young friend bade each an affectionate farewell and took her departure, while the journey to L—— proved a sad and tedious one, though she dreamed over and over again the events of her visit—the words he had spoken—the vows he had renewed—which afforded much pleasure; but withal a strange sadness depressed her spirits. Would they ever meet again? But why fear? Only one twelve-month, and he would claim her for his own. Surely she should look forward with great joy that the blessed time was so near at hand; but to-day, somehow, this one year looked longer than the three had in the hopeful days of the past. However, she reached L—— at an early hour and was greeted very affectionately by all, which served to dispel some of the gloom which depressed her. Lottie, also, had returned, and it being her last term at school, was to board at the Trevelyan's. She was unusually gracious to Pearl, and as Genevieve and herself

roomed together, consequently Pearl and Lulu shared the same apartment. This pleased the latter very much, and Pearl, although many times wishing to be alone, on the whole was very glad of Lulu's company; and many a long winter evening they spent together in their room by the side of the cheerful, blazing fire, talking as young girls will, sometimes of the past, but oftener building air-castles in the far-off sunny future. Pearl, in the meantime, striving, by her example and words of Christian counsel, to lead Lulu to a life of piety. A lasting impression was made, while her prayers and entreaties proved not to be in vain, for Lulu was brought to the Savior through that winter's association and close companionship with her gentle cousin.

Thus we see the importance of sowing the seed during the present opportunity; though years may be required to bring it forth and ripen it to maturity. Often, without the utterance of a word, patient endurance and a life of faithful adherence to the principles of the Bible, will lead some poor wandering sinner from the path of error to that of wisdom, and be instrumental in accomplishing much good.

Charles, encouraged by his success at school, proved himself quite an artist, as the numerous paintings that adorned the walls indicated, and one of a lovely scene in Switzerland he had presented to Pearl, hung in a conspicuous place in her room, opposite the recent reproduction, by Pearl herself, of the ink-stained painting, which far excelled the former, and was much complimented by all who gazed upon it.

Mrs. Trevelyan led a life of gaiety and fashion surpassed by none, giving parties and receiving invitations among the *elite*; Genevieve and Lottie participating with the zest of two young, proud and fashionable misses; Lulu and Charles often joining, but Pearl very seldom left her room. Such occasions she sometimes hailed with delight, as she was then left more to herself, spending the time frequently in reperusing loving letters from Paul and Claude, the latter being now in college; or, as she sat with no light but the cheering fire, the sound of the music floating up from the lower rooms would bear her on its waves of harmony far away to Paul and the dreamy past, where,

lost to all else, Lulu would find her when at a late hour she would seek their room to retire.

It was an unusually lovely day in the early spring, and the sun hung low in the sky. The close of the term had come again, and that night there was to be a grand *soiree* at the house of one of the *elite* of L——, to which the Trevelyans and their friends were invited. All were going—even Pearl had yielded to Lulu's entreaties, and a beautiful fabric of mellow pink—her favorite color—fashionably made, with rich lace and ruffles, lay on the sofa in her own room, just returned from the mantua-makers, which she could not refrain from looking upon admiringly, when Genevieve entered in great agitation, inquiring, "I have lost one of my bracelets, Pearl; have you seen it?"

"No, cousin; not since yesterday morning, on your drawing table;" and rising she began to assist in the search.

"Oh, dear," said Genevieve, as all proved of no avail, "I might have known it was not in here. It is always so when there is any great party in prospect. I never knew it to fail;" and flitting out of the room in a petulant mood, slammed the door.

Pearl was very sorry for the proud girl, knowing that if the article was not found the evening's enjoyment would be partially destroyed for her, as one like it was difficult to be obtained; but having a few extra stitches to make, went on busily with her preparations. Lulu soon came in, and the two were nearly ready, when there came a murmuring of voices, a rap at the door, and at Pearl's bidding, Lottie and Genevieve entered, dressed alike, in the height of style, in white grenadine over silk of cerulean hue, trailing after them like royal robes.

"Pearl, dear, I came in to see if you would be so kind as to lend me your blue fan for the evening? It matches Genevieve's so nicely," said Lottie.

"Certainly," replied Pearl, glad to grant even her a favor, and unlocking her trunk and raising the lid, opened a small box, and lifting the fan placed it in Lottie's hand, when Genevieve exclaimed, almost with a shriek:

"Oh! there's my bracelet!" and springing to the trunk, raised

it from another apartment of the same box which contained the fan. "There! Pearl Trevelyan knew where it was all the time—you hateful thing! In your haste to serve Lottie you forgot where you had concealed it, I suppose."

"Did you ever see the like?" said Lottie, with a significant glance.

Even Lulu looked astonished, and whispered: "I never thought it."

And what of Pearl during all these exclamations, intimating that she was a thief? Pale as death, she sat like one struck dumb with unutterable grief and amazement. Then a flush of indignation mounted to her brow as the truth flashed across her mind that some enemy had placed it there to brand her character with the terrible stigma of *thief*. Taking her paleness and silence as a proof of guilt, they gazed upon her with a look of impudent inquiry, saying plainly as words can: "No defense will change our opinion, but we are ready to hear what possible apology you can make." Controlling her emotion as best she could, though a slight tremor was discernable through her voice when she spoke:

"I suppose no words of mine will satisfy you; but God above, who knoweth all things, is my witness, that I know not how the bracelet came there, and had not seen it until Genevieve took it from the box. I can account for it in no other way than that some evil-disposed person—I will not judge who, though I have my suspicions—has placed it there to injure my reputation."

"You are right in thinking what you can say will amount to no possible good, for the evidence of your guilt is too strong," said Lottie, unfeelingly.

"So I think," said Genevieve, and placing her arm within Lottie's, the two swept scornfully from the room.

"But *you* surely do not think so mean of me, dear Lulu?" said Pearl, bursting into tears and throwing her arms around the lithe form of the young girl.

Slightly repelling her, she said: "I do not wish to believe it; but I can not help wondering how the bracelet came in your

trunk when no one else had the key but yourself. It looks very much against you, I must admit."

As these cold, unexpected words fell upon the ear of the deeply injured girl, a chill swept over her, and reeling back like one stunned by a heavy blow, sank into a chair. Great waves of agony welled up from her heart; but they froze in their upward passage—she could not shed another tear.

"Oh! Lulu, Lulu! and you, too, have turned against me. Oh, my God! this seems more than I can bear!" and rising, she walked to and fro, wildly ringing her hands, then seeking the farthest corner, she sank upon the carpet, her dress enveloping her beautiful form like sea-billows that had caught the loveliest hue of sunset, and moaned pitifully, bitterly, as though all the misery of her life were crowded into this one hour.

"You will rumple your beautiful dress, crouching there in that manner," said Lulu. "You forget it is nearly time for the carriage to come."

"My dress is but a secondary affair, now that my once untainted character is so cruelly injured; besides, do not once think that I shall attend the party under present circumstances."

"Very well, observe your own mind; however, I will tender your regrets, and on my return hope to find you in a better state of mind. I am quite sure Genevieve will overlook this. There, I hear voices in the hall. I believe the carriage has arrived;" and closing the door hurriedly, she left Pearl alone in her intense grief.

"Overlook this!" What a mockery! What mattered it, if in their hearts they still cherished the belief that she was a thief? Nothing she had ever suffered compared with this. Her haughty aunt would believe it, she was sure; but Charles—dear, noble Charles—would he, too, leave her amid this severe storm of adversity, with no earthly arm to sustain her? She hardly dared hope; for had not Lulu, whom she thought so true? Brother Claude would never believe her guilty, she was certain; but should she write all to him? Would this not add to the apparently heavy burden weighing on his mind when last they met? Although it might afford her much relief, yet she

would endure this blighting trial alone, and sometime, perhaps, her innocence might be proven. And last, but not least, came Paul. Ah! her heart sank within her now. If the knowledge came to his ears, was it not possible that he might believe it? He, of all others? Her life would be ruined! ruined! Every bright prospect darkened! every hope blasted forever! The tears came now; and throwing herself on the couch, she wept and sobbed violently. After a few moments she rose, and kneeling, poured out a heartfelt prayer to God that He would be her support through this fiery ordeal, direct her every action, and prove her innocence in His own good time, making even her enemies to be at peace with her; then lighting a small lamp, she sat down and wrote to Paul the circumstance, from the beginning, entreating him to be her friend; stating her certainty that he would be, and that while *he* was still true, her own conscience and the support of her Heavenly Father would be sufficient to inspire her with new life, though all others turned against her. She had scarcely finished when she heard Charles' voice outside, asking to enter. She assented, and as he came in the look of tender pity on his countenance told her he knew all. She burst into tears.

Oh, Charles, dear cousin, I entreat you, tell me, tell me, have I a friend in you, or not?"

"Yes, dear Pearl. Lulu told me all, and I could not rest a moment until I saw you. It may have been rude, but I could remain no longer. I want to tell you that I do not believe you took the bracelet, and never will. Some one must have obtained a false key and placed it there to injure you."

"Thank God, dear Charles! Still the same! Your friendship will be doubly valued now."

"How is it possible for me to believe it? Is not your Christian character well known to me? You have saved me from ruin, perhaps from the darkest fate ever known by man! for what will not intemperance lead to? And shall I turn against you now? No, never! never! though the strongest proof be offered. While Pearl Trevelyan declares her innocence, my firm trust in her truth shall not be shaken."

"Oh, Charles, dear, cousin Charles, you know not what comfort your words afford me. May God bless you, as I do."

"I came near forgetting that I have a note for you from Clara. It came enclosed in mine," said Charles.

Pearl took it eagerly, and soon devoured its contents, being very brief, as Clara was very busy making preparations—for what? that which pleased Pearl exceedingly—for attending school next term at L——.

"Capital!" she said, the glad tears shining in her eyes. "Now I shall have a friend indeed. Board at the Widow Brown's has been already engaged by a wealthy uncle of hers, who passed through here little less than a week ago, who has kindly consented to pay her tuition and wait until she can return it by her own industry. And now, I think, Charles, that it is best for me to engage board there also, as my stay here would cause many unpleasant feelings, and prove disagreeable in the extreme."

"I shall be very sorry to have you leave us, and under such sad circumstances, too; but you know best where you would be most happy and content; therefore, I will not interfere," said Charles, sadly. "Have you thought who the person can be that has so shamefully treated you? I believe it is that wicked, heartless girl, Lottie Stanwick."

"Judge not, that ye be not judged," said Pearl, gently reproving him. "I dare not say what my thoughts are, fearing that I am mistaken; and it seems so dreadful to accuse an innocent person wrongfully."

"You are right, cousin; and I hope I shall profit by your example. I will bid you good-night, now, with an added assurance that you will ever find Charles Trevelyan a true and faithful friend."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks! Good-night;" and the door closed after his retreating form, leaving Pearl in her loneliness once more; though his presence and words had somewhat removed her depression, as had also the letter from her dear friend, Clara.

Lulu came in at a late hour, and, as Pearl had already retired, nothing was said between them for the night. In the

morning she arose long before Lulu, and strolling down to the Widow Brown's, who lived in a neat little villa in the suburbs, found no trouble in securing board, and quite fell in love with its jolly mistress.

The inmates of Trevelyan Hall were somewhat surprised at her sudden departure, yet hardly expressed regret; and only a day or two subsequent to the foregoing occurrence, she finds herself safely located in a snug little dressing-room at Widow Brown's.

At the commencement of the term came Clara, and as may be supposed, the meeting between the two friends was a joyous one. Every event which had transpired since they last met was narrated; and Pearl had never seen her friend in such a paroxysm of rage as when the story of the bracelet was told. She grew almost frantic at the insult offered to Pearl, and did not hesitate to express her opinion that Lottie Stanwick had perpetrated the foul act. Her disposition was usually mild—not easily aroused; but in her love and friendship, true as steel; resenting an injury to a friend quicker than one to herself; loving an object with the whole strength of her nature; noble and self-sacrificing in the extreme. Pearl was beginning to fully realize her worth—wisely coming to the conclusion that all should not be judged by Lottie's standard; that because one heart was corrupted by pride, envy and selfishness, it did not necessarily follow that all must be; so during those spring days she unbosomed herself to Clara, telling her every little joy and sorrow, all her hopes for the future, as well as fears; while Clara would rejoice or weep with her as the case might be. Consequently, with such mutual love and sympathy existing between them, their lives became more firmly knit together by ties which earth could not sever—that of true friendship and sisterly affection.

The story of the theft was rarely mentioned now, dying down as such stories usually do. Although it weighed heavily on her mind, as she often found herself the subject of numerous slights occasioned by it, yet another thing caused her far more uneasiness, and gave her no rest day nor night. No letter had come from Paul in reply to hers. Why was it, oh! why was it? Did

he believe the charge brought against her? This would be worse than death. Perhaps some one had written besides herself and influenced him against her.

"He is not worthy of you, darling, if he places no more confidence than that in his betrothed, and believes her guilty of such an act," Clara had said when she told her of his apparent neglect.

She could not help thinking that her words were true, and that it might be she ought to begin to unlearn the lesson of love and bury the past in forgetfulness; but oh! how vain the trial; how utterly impossible. She could easier lay down and die; yes, let her life-blood ebb away slowly, drop by drop.

One afternoon Pearl, Genevieve and several other young ladies remained later than usual to recite their French lesson, when, as they arose to go, Genevieve exultingly remarked to a friend—very desirous, in the meantime, that Pearl should hear, which she did, distinctly:

"They say Paul Marshall has been in town, only remained one night, and has left for some foreign part, I learn."

Pearl turned away that Genevieve might not observe the effect, but she trembled like an aspen, while her face turned as pale and rigid as marble. Walking unsteadily home like one in a strange, bewildering dream, she sought the little room, also shared by Clara, who now sat engaged in reading, and looking up as the door opened, became thoroughly alarmed at the haggard, unnatural appearance of her friend.

"Oh! Clara, Clara, I wish I was dead! Why did I not die ere this dreadful knowledge came to me? Would to God I had! Anything but this! anything but this! Oh, kill me! kill me! or I shall go mad!" and sinking beside Clara, she buried her face in her hands, and, sobbing violently, rocked wildly to and fro in her agony.

"What has happened? tell me, dear Pearl, what has caused this dreadful change?" inquired Clara, endeavoring to soothe her; but she answered not; only kept on sobbing and moaning piteously, like a lone bird bereft of its mate, until wholly overcome by grief, she fell a dead weight at Clara's feet. Restora-

tives were applied, which soon brought her to consciousness, and looking round, bewildered, she said:

"What was it; what was it, Clara? Oh, I remember now, and I did not tell you, did I? Paul has been here, darling, and gone again. Genevieve said so. I have felt there was something wrong when no letter came, and what is life worth to me now? Can you tell me, Clara? If Charles had only been here, it might have been different; or, at least, he might have known what caused this strange neglect."

"Yes, it is a pity he should have been away at this particular time; but I am sure there is some mistake; he would not thus have forsaken you."

"No, no; it is all too true, too true! He did not write. I might have known."

All that night long she tossed restlessly, murmuring wildly, and the next morning found her in a burning fever and raving deliriously. Clara immediately wrote to Claude, then at Dr. Norton's, and as soon as possible he stood within the sick room of his sister. He looked very sad and careworn, and shaking his head doubtfully, said:

"Violent attack. Nerves over-taxed. Some anguish of the mind greatly the cause, I should judge;" then dealing out some medicine, and fixing his eyes upon Clara searchingly, he inquired: "You are my sister's dearest friend. Tell me, do you know whether anything has disturbed her of late?"

She hesitated a moment, then deeming it for the best, told the whole truth. "But I hope there is some mistake," added Clara.

"I think not," replied Claude. "He has gone to Europe, and, to tell you the truth, I feared something was wrong; for a few weeks ago he received a letter, and it seemed to affect him strangely. He was changed from that time. All his gayety fled; not a smile could be called forth even by the most witty; and the depression, so unusual to him, occasioned many remarks. Lottie Stanwick was there making a short visit, and gay parties were held, hopeful of raising his spirits; but all failed; and before her departure he left us, stating that he should visit this place, then embark for Europe. Poor child; poor,

dear Pearl. I little thought she would be the subject of such cruel neglect;" and bowing his head on his hands he remained silent for a long time.

"The term closes to-morrow," said Clara, "then I shall be able to take the charge of her continually."

"I am truly glad," said Claude, "as I know she will then have the best of attention, while you shall be duly rewarded."

For weeks the sable drapery of death hung round that chamber of sickness. Pearl suffered fearfully; calling on Paul, entreating him to come back just once more, that she might tell him she did not take the bracelet—she was not a thief, God knew it. "Oh! don't leave me for that!" she cried. "They all believe it; but I didn't; oh, I didn't. Come back; oh, come back. God!—sweet Savior!—bring him back! She put it there, I know she did." And thus she would rave for hours and hours, tossing her arms frantically, and staring wildly about.

As Clara feared, Claude inquired, though rather unconcernedly, thinking it was some phantasy of a diseased brain, if there was any real meaning connected with her wild words about the bracelet. Seeing no possible way to avoid it, she beckoned him aside and narrated the whole circumstance. His anger and resentment were hardly containable. He walked to and fro in great agitation, his face livid, his lips tightly compressed as though struggling with a mighty effort to suppress his passion; then seating himself, bowed his head upon his hand and groaned aloud:

"Poor child! poor child! No wonder she is mad with fever. She kept it from me—would not let me share the trial—for fear the anguish it might cause, you said. Oh, would that I had known it, she might have been spared all this. Now, I fear, it is too late, too late. And those, her accusers, may God show them what they have done, and prove to them her innocence, is my prayer. Poor child! poor little Pearl!" and he wept like a very child.

Counsel had been held with an eminent physician from a distant city, and his encouraging words, that every thing had been

and was being done that could be for her recovery, gave Claude new hope.

One fine evening the crescent moon hung low in the sky, the stars twinkled brightly, and a slight breeze folded back the snowy curtains of the window and kissed the burning brow of the sufferer, as she lay in a deep sleep among the luxurious pillows. The crisis of the disease had arrived, and the awakening would determine whether for life or death. The Widow Brown was there, though her usually merry countenance was very serious; also Charles and Lulu, the former sitting beside Clara trying to allay her fears by whispered words of hope and consolation, though his own heart, indeed, was almost hopeless; while the countenance of Lulu had an expression of deep sorrow, not unmingled with remorse. Claude sat beside the still form on the couch, his head bowed, while hot, burning tears coursed through his fingers. All waited breathlessly. Moments seemed hours. Oh, this cruel suspense! The sufferer made a slight movement, then opened her eyes. A joyous exclamation from Claude told the glad news. The light of reason beamed therefrom—she was saved!

“Now,” said the young doctor, “the least excitement must be avoided, and attention paid to the most careful nursing.”

“That shall be my part,” said Clara, joyfully; then approaching Pearl, who looked at her longingly, took the small, emaciated hand in her own, and stooping, softly imprinted a kiss on her pale brow.

“Oh, Clara, dear Clara, where have I been since that dreadful night? It seems just like a horrid dream.”

“Hush, hush, darling; do not excite yourself now; rest, and when you get strong enough I will tell you.”

So turning her head on the pillow like a tired child, she closed her eyes again, while each one quietly left the apartment, excepting Clara, who stayed beside her, taking up the duties of nurse with far more hope, thank God, than in the past, though with a greater degree of responsibility; feeling that upon her tender care depended her friend's final recovery; and from that period she began rapidly to improve.

Meanwhile the praises of the young doctor's success sounded far and near. "Dr. Claude has made his fame and fortune, I believe, in performing this wonderful cure," said the Widow Brown. "The child has been dreadful sick. I never thought she'd live. It seems like a miracle."

"Yes," said a neighbor, who had just dropped in, "and I hear the past winter is the first of his collegiate course."

"Remarkable!" said another, "he must have been very diligent in his studies."

So when the young collegian, leaving his sister convalescent, and feeling that his presence would be no more needed, returned to Dr. Norton's, it was with a lighter heart than he had known for months. All were there, even Grace, to grasp his hand and congratulate him on his arrival. So hope, again, began to dawn upon his pathway. Grace was the guiding star of his life now. Every hope of success in the future, every joy of the present, was poured into her willing, sympathizing ear; for the winning, sisterly manner with which she always treated him, drew him unintentionally to her. The subject of love and matrimony was never discussed, however; and though many times he would read aloud from the different poets, in his deep, rich tones, yet when occasionally he would come upon a striking poetical expression, that would seem to unveil his soul to her, and speak the very words that sometimes almost trembled forth, he would cast, through the warm, thrilling tones, a cold and icy current, that she might not divine the inmost feelings of his heart, which were almost overcoming him with their intensity, and the bitter struggle it required to suppress them; albeit he succeeded well, for, though Grace Nellisse believed him to be her true and devoted friend, she dared not dream he loved her; she would not cultivate the flowers of hope only to see them wither and die; yet one little bud had its germ way down in the secluded recess of her heart, hardly known to herself now, which, should it be blasted, would awake her to the sad reality.

Nothing had been heard from her father, and she had utterly given him up as dead. Unconsciously she clung to Claude, there being such a great similarity between them, particularly

in intellectual pursuits, as well as their love of the beautiful, both in nature and art. The old-time gayety of spirit had come back to her once more, the old brilliancy to her beautiful eyes—the bright color to her cheeks, and that habitual look of sorrow had, in a great measure, vanished; but never, until his absence at college, did she realize how essential his mere presence was to her happiness. Every thing wore a gloomy aspect, even those apartments she had thought could not be surpassed in beauty, for the great light of the house had gone out with Claude Trevelyan. When he again returned she felt as though she had grown years older in experience; the girl, in those few short months, had ripened into the thoughtful woman, hoping, yet fearing; longing for and yet dreading his presence; for that which comes to all, at least once in a life-time, had come to her. He perceived the slight constraint in her manner towards him, and hardly knew what to attribute it to. It naturally tended to sadden him, added to the weight already on his mind; and when the news of his sister's illness reached him, it altogether seemed very hard to bear. But his success, and the free and delighted manner with which Grace greeted him on his return, cheered his heart once more. She evinced great interest in the welfare of Pearl, expressing much joy on learning how rapidly she was improving, which highly pleased Claude. Had it been once, she would immediately have flown to her side, but the natural fear and timidity of a young heart in its first love, restrained her; besides, he might guess the truth, and his knowledge of her forwardness in bestowing her affections unasked would be too humiliating. Yet his manner was almost loving sometimes, she fancied; then the thought came that perhaps he loved her and dare not speak because of her wealth and high position in society; this caused the restraint to be partially thrown off and more freedom assumed in her manner towards him, which he had observed on his return. This one little thought, perhaps, proved instrumental in changing the tenor of two lives.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I, *alone*, am left on earth!
To whom nor Relative nor Blood remains,
No!—not a kindred drop that runs in human veins."
—Campbell.

It is a night in the early autumn. The green leaves are banded with gold and scarlet, tiny zephyrs stir them gently and fan the pale brow of a lovely young girl who sits on the grass beneath a great maple, her head thrown back against its brown, sturdy trunk, her eyes gazing up into its heart of green streaked with blood-red, and one small, white hand placed idly upon the pages of a testament which she had evidently been reading. It is our friend Pearl. She has wandered out here alone with this most comforting of books, and now sits in deep thought. She has hardly gained her natural strength since her illness, but has commenced her last term at school. It all seemed like one long, sad, strange dream to her, as though she had closed her eyes upon a world of hope and happiness to open them again only on one joyless and despairing. God pity her! Sad indeed is her life, having thus early to feel the bitter sting of disappointment. Her features are expressive of a quiet submission; but there is a deep shadow of pain in the large violet eyes, while faint lines of sorrow can be seen upon the pure brow and around the sweet mouth. She is dreaming now of that morning she spent three long, weary years ago. Oh! how fresh does it arise in her memory; and only one little treasure does she possess that links her to that never-forgotten past: the ruby ring. Thank God, it gleamed upon her finger yet where *his* hand had placed it. The only shadow of a hope now, and scarcely that; but had not Paul Marshall said that while it there remained he was still true to her? yet how was it possible, when he had so heartlessly forsaken her—gone, yes, *gone*—without sign or word? And so every scene where they had met passed vividly before her. She lives over again those sweet hours passed in his presence—the

ride to Dr. Norton's—the night when her picture was hung where his beautiful eyes alone could gaze upon it, and their renewed vows. Then comes back to her, like a bitter sting, what Clara had learned from Claude of the letter, Paul's strange appearance, subsequently Lottie's visit, and Paul's departure. The letter must have been her own; and, oh, heavens! he had believed the dreadful charge. This was the bitterest drop in the cup of sorrow. If aught else had been the cause she could have borne it better. Why did they not let her die ere she knew of this? Why, why did they try to save a life for which she cared so little? No wonder the harp-string broke in the midst of most joyful song. Her own heart-strings were one by one being riven, and ere long the last, last one that bound her to life would break and set her free from this cruel bondage. She thought she had conquered this wild wish to die, but the pain that had wrung her heart to-night made her long for it more than before, and lifting a heart-felt prayer to God that He would take away such wicked desires and be to her a loving, supporting Father through this vale of sorrow, she arose and wended her way slowly homeward. How many a weary earth-traveler finds the threads of hope and life slowly breaking one by one, while the cup of bitterness is drained to the very dregs and not a beam of light illuminates the darkness of his night of woe. But look to God.

*“ Art thou alone and does thy soul complain
 It lives in vain.
 Not vainly does he live who can *endure*,
 O be thou sure
 That he who hopes and suffers here can earn
 A sure return.
 Has thy soul bent beneath earth's heavy load,
 Look thou beyond
 If life is bitter—there forever shine
 Hopes more divine.”

And now, dear reader, no better can I narrate the progress of events for a time than by a few extracts from Pearl's journal:

“SEPTEMBER 20.

“Yes, it is autumn again, and with it comes the memory of that autumn three long years ago. How far away they seem. Happy, happy days, like a dim, uncertain dream, and yet they

*A. Proctor.

were reality—they *were reality*, can it be? but it is all, all gone! Earthly happiness is no more for me.

“ ‘Tis past, 'tis gone, that dream of a morn,
And I move as a thing apart
From the joys of summer, of life, of love,
Cold winter is in my heart.’ ”

“How these autumn odors carry me back among the scenes of long-ago to the sheltered nook by the lake where we sat so oft together, among the shadows and beneath the twinkling stars, with one of his arms wound round me and my hand clasped in his. One night I sung to him the soul-thrilling song ‘Lorena,’ little dreaming the words would sometime so well apply to Paul Marshall and myself. Shall we ever meet again? God grant it. Shall I be surrounded by this same sad, blighting spell, until these autumn days are passed? Yes, I know it—I feel it—and it will not be over then—no, but will continue on forever and forever, casting a dark impenetrable pall over my life, and dragging me down to the grave. If I were there I would not mind it; but it is the thorny path I shrink from, for I can not forget—I can not forget. God help me. I am so weak and cowardly amid the strife.”

“OCTOBER 16.

“Clara has just gone out, leaving me alone. She is prospering finely in learning, and I am really excited almost to envy when I think that her boarding-school life has hardly more than begun, while this is my last term. What will I do when the dull, monotonous home-life begins once more—when I am placed among those scenes which I have not visited since that night when I heard Genevieve speak the dreadful truth that almost snapped the brittle thread that held my life? Do I wish it had? Yes, yes, sometimes. I look far away on the velvety hill-side and wish that I slept far beneath it. I long for the grave’s sweet rest, for I am weary, weary—wearied of life and its trials. A moment’s leisure brings such sad thoughts. Why must they come? I did not intend they should. I meant to bury them forever from my memory in the grave of the past; but alas! how vainly. They will break from their prison-house and come to torment me—to tear my heart and set the old wounds to bleed-

ing. I have striven to forget those days of sunshine and happiness—forget there ever could be such in a life-time; but I can not, I can not. I had a letter from brother Claude to-day. He writes that he meets with unexpected success in all of his endeavors. I am truly thankful. Perhaps the old, sad look will be gone from his face when we meet again. What should I do without his priceless love? But how changed are our lives from the old-time life when we lived continually together in our dear cottage-home! Even those times will never come again. Oh! if they could, it seems that I could almost forget there had ever been a change, and blot it out as I would an unpleasant dream. But alas! his profession would take him away from our little rustic dell to the crowded town or city, while loneliness and seclusion will be my lot. I tremble when I think of the years that must come, and long for the rest beyond. God forgive me. I know I must put these idle thoughts away and live for some noble end, glorify my Heavenly Father by a life of piety, self-denial and patient endurance; meanwhile, not dreaming of earth's happiness—then, perhaps, I shall cease to long for it.”

“NOVEMBER 3.

“Another letter from Claude, which left him well and in usually good spirits, judging by the merry tone in which he writes. Cousin Charlie was here last eve, came in and talked with us awhile, then suddenly I remembered promising Mrs. Brown I would come to the parlor and spend the evening with her, so excused myself, withdrew and left the lovers alone. Passed the evening very pleasantly in the dear old lady's society, for she has a jolly, social manner, and we find such a companion an agreeable change, sometimes. Clara was waiting for me when I sought our room. ‘I am very happy, Pearl, dear; oh! happier than I ever was in my life before,’ she said; then kneeling at my feet she poured out the glad news of her betrothal. Yes, glad were they to my darling friend Clara, and I tried to rejoice with her; but the thought would come of the time when I was just as happy—of the love and adoration poured into my heart—the avowals of truth and fidelity—even the seal of a betrothal ring; and yet he had proved cruel, heart-

less, false! How could I believe another true more than him? The warning, not to grasp too surely the bud of hope, almost trembled forth; but I suppressed it with an effort, and thought, with how much bitterness: let her find the last hope fail her as I have; let her learn by bitter experience, if she must, poor Clara, I will not be the one to dash the cup of nectar from her lips. Aunt and the girls will object, I am sure, as she is from such an obscure family, for Charles has intimated as much to me. For my own part, I know very little about it, for they still maintain the same studied indifference since the occurrence of the bracelet affair, and which, I suppose, is the foundation of all my unhappiness. Oh, that it had never been! But, alas! it has darkly colored all my future, and may God grant at last that my innocence may be proven, although the old loves and friendships never return. This desertion of friends is so hard to endure."

"NOVEMBER 28.

"Home again. Yes, Clara and I are at home again. She returns soon—I no more. What I wished for—a graduate's diploma—has been granted me, and though I am thankful for the knowledge gained, yet how much less joy does it afford than I anticipated. This year was to bring me so much of pleasure; but it is the saddest—the most joyless of my life. I have not visited the little nook by the lake since my return. The last time I was there he was with me, and I shall never press my foot there alone this side the grave—never, until he comes to seek it with me, and that—that will never be! Hope lies buried deep beside the waters. Dear old Ellen has scarcely altered the surroundings of our cottage. It is the same dear old place yet—everything has a sadness about it. I went in to-day and swept a few strains across the old harp. Every note, in spite of me, sounded wild and mournful—no joyful chord poured forth. I suppose it was because the strings were touched by the fingers of grief, and echoed the sorrow and regret of the heart. Even the canary's voice has a doleful cadence, while my own little boudoir looks dim and shadowy. In short, all has a darkened aspect, as though some withering blast had swept over and left its mark."

"MAY 7.

"More than five months have passed since I wrote on these loved pages. I hardly thought it would be so long; but so little has occurred of note, and life has been so full of dull monotony, loneliness and sad regrets, that I have shrank from writing continually the same sad strain; but to-day a little light and joy have come to my heart—for Claude is coming home—the first visit since his return from college. It seems so long since last we met, dear, good brother! I wonder if he has changed, and yet why need I? for I know he must be the same as ever, just as good and kind and tender. Dear old Anthony and Ellen have been in ecstasies since the letter came. The former has gone to the city, and Claude is to return with him. Hark! I believe that is old Dobbin's step now; yes, there they are coming—surely coming. I cannot be mistaken."

Pearl tossed her journal carelessly upon the table and bounded merrily down the stairs with the elasticity of childhood, which for many months had been unknown to her, and was soon clasped in her brother's arms.

"Well, Masther Claude, an' how are ye?" said old Ellen, coming forward with her hand extended; "sure, an' we're glad to see ye. It seems like good old times, afore ye or Missy Pearl left us. Our hearts were glad when she came back to the nest, but it was not complate without ye, an' the winter has been long an' lonely to our deary. She isn't the same creature, sure, an' ye'll have to cheer her up a little afore ye return."

"Yes, yes, Ellen," said Claude, after shaking her proffered hand, warmly, "I'm going to take her back to the city in a few days. Dr. Norton's family won that promise from me and would hear no objection."

"Indade, then the old home will be lonely again; but take her, take the poor child. It will revive her droopin' spirits, an' bring the old bloom back to her cheeks."

At these words Claude drew back and took a look at his sister. A strange, frightened expression passed over his features as he saw how the once beautiful and happy face had altered. Ah! he knew but too well the cause—the accusation

of the theft, as well as the cruel desertion of him she loved better than life itself. He turned away and sought the window, while his brow clouded and his lips compressed with passion as he thought of the cruelty of those once professing to be her friends—now her deadliest enemies. Somehow Lottie Stanwick would come up before him whenever he thought of the bracelet. He had no doubt of her guilt, though he had never lispied it, and the fearful thought of revenge tempted him; but it had only a momentary advantage, for his better nature triumphed, and flinging it away like a poisoned dart, he again put on a smiling face, striving to enliven his sister, who, he found, had alarmingly changed, both in manner and in looks. After tea they wandered arm in arm out in the forest, gathering the beautiful May flowers and waxen tufts of the trailing arbutus, forming them into bouquets, talking, and walking slowly, while Claude was drawing her unconsciously towards the little nook by the lake. Suddenly looking up, she turned white as ashes, a tremor ran through her frame, while with a pitiful expression she said:

“No, no, please, brother Claude, I don’t wish to go there;” then sinking like a tired child on the fallen trunk of a tree, covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

“Pearl, darling, it grieves me to see you thus, and yet I can not censure you. I do not wonder that your life is almost a burden to you. I do not like to think of those who caused all this, for it makes me feel so wicked and revengeful.”

“I did not mean to be so quickly overcome; but it was so sudden. Forgive me. I am not making your home-visit pleasant at all. Now tell me, Claude,” she continued, anxious to change the subject, “what are your prospects for the future? Does it seem possible that you have met with such unparalleled success?”

“No, sister; for it seems scarcely more than yesterday since we were planning and contriving some way for me to become a physician. God has dealt kindly with us, and we must not forget to pour out our hearts in gratitude to Him; besides, I have had an offer that I little expected. Dr. Norton came in last evening

and proposed that I should be his successor, as he wished to retire from business entirely, and for the present he wished me to occupy the same office and remain with his family as formerly. He said that his influence in my behalf should be exerted at every opportunity, and he had no doubt of my success, as he should not fail to assist me in every possible manner. He talked to me as a father to a son, giving me much valuable advice. He has proved himself an inestimable friend, and I do thank God for directing me to his door."

"Yes, and I am truly thankful for this kind offer, and shall feel quite at rest with regard to your future," said Pearl.

That night they knelt in the little library again as in days gone by, and offered up heartfelt prayers to God.

Two weeks passed of quiet enjoyment to the brother and sister at Moss Cottage, living over the old days as nearly as possible, visiting their favorite haunts and sailing on the lake, which Claude did not consider in vain, for Pearl appeared happier, and the mild spring air had brought back some of the lost color to her cheeks and the buoyancy to her steps. Sometimes the thought that she was not his sister would intrude itself upon Claude, but still hearing nothing from Mr. Nellisse, he felt less fear; and although for the sake of Grace he wished for his return, yet otherwise dreaded it on account of the change it might cause in the life of Pearl, thereby affecting his own. Since his success, and the unexpected offer made by Dr. Norton, a great weight had been lifted from his mind with regard to the future, although he had experience enough about the life of a physician to know that there was much care and anxiety connected with it; but he felt that with the help of God, on whose arm he relied, he was strong for the conflict. So with a brave heart he was determined to press on through every difficulty. Then, perhaps, the day might come when he could venture to sue for the hand of young and lovely Grace Nellisse. The hope was stronger in his heart than it had ever been before, and what a pleasure to still be allowed to remain under the same roof and see her daily, while how often, as he sat alone, would he wonder what her thoughts would be when she learned his intention.

He little knew how her heart beat with gladness on that May evening when, as dark clouds were surrounding her, and her spirit seemed burdened by a weight of sadness, Dr. Norton came in, and with a stroke of his great palm across the shining waves of hair, told her that Claude was to be his successor. So when the brother and sister arrived, she met them with doubly cheerful spirits, and Pearl, with an affection almost sisterly. She noted the alteration in Pearl's face and manner, but scarcely dreamed the cause, though she strove in every possible way to bring back her old gayety. Although she partially succeeded there seemed to have fallen a storm so blighting that its effects could not be easily effaced. Parties were made, rides taken in the country, excursions to the neighboring mountain, besides many other amusements; but all failed to enliven her spirits. She struggled to escape from the lethargy herself, but in vain. Here, where they had once been together—this that had once been his home—the picture gallery—the conservatory—the music room—all brought still fresher to her mind those past days of joy, and how quickly they have fled, never, never to return again. Something which brought a ray of hope to her heart was this: The picture of Moss Cottage hung no longer in the gallery, while Paul's room, which they passed through once, looked just as it did on that night long ago when they sat together there; but her picture, thank God—*that* was gone; perhaps he had cared a little for it, and taken it at least from the gaze of curious observers. She dared not lisp his name, and when Grace began to talk of him changed the subject as quickly as opportunity permitted.

“Strange that he has never written to any one, isn't it, and never told us even what part he was bound for? He left all at once, and when I asked him to tell me where he was going, such an expression of bitter despair crossed his features that it startled me, and he answered in such a hopeless tone: ‘Oh, it don't matter, Grace, any where, any where, away from every thing and every one I have ever known. I can hardly tell myself;’ then there was such a strange, decided pause in his voice, I dared ask no more. He came through L—, did he not?”

Pearl's heart gave a great bound at the unexpected question, while she answered, "I believe so," and just then casting her eyes upon a gorgeous colored anti-macassar, spoke of its beauty, thereby changing the subject.

Grace's words continually haunted Pearl during the remainder of her stay, and after returning home proved a source of hope, for it showed that something had caused his unusual sadness, and perhaps it might be connected in some measure with herself. Perhaps he had not given her up without at least a pang of regret, although he had appeared so perfectly pitiless.

Thus days passed into weeks—weeks into months—until two years more were numbered with those gone before, nothing occurring to change the life of our little heroine—all one dull and changeless routine of duty—until she looked forward to nothing farther in life. Claude sometimes paid them a visit, though seldom, owing to his extensive and successful practice. Once Grace had been out and spent a few weeks, but Dr. Norton's city home was shunned like a prison house, for the chains of memory while there bound her in such a vice-like grasp that they had seemed to hold her ever under the same sad spell.

Clara had returned home now to remain, and Charles had come down with her to pay them a visit—the first since her return from school. He had gone over to Clara's home, and Pearl sits alone looking out upon the pale glory of the stars and of the new moon, which hangs low in the sky. Rising hastily she lights a lamp, and taking her journal sits down to write. Her face is as pale and cold and rigid as a statue. There is a look of despair and settled determination upon it. Her eyes have a strange glitter, while her lips are colorless and compressed. She writes rapidly, excitedly. Let us read:

"JULY 12.

"Yes, once more—only once more—will I write on these dear old pages. Little did I dream what a record of sorrow it would be. It must be the crisis, for I see nothing that could farther add to my misery, except death, and that would be welcome. This morning, as I sat shaded by the curtains of the bay win-

dow in the library, the door stood ajar and I heard Ellen speak my name. At first I did not heed, but as she went on her words attracted my attention, and seemed to freeze every drop of blood in my veins and chain me to the spot: 'You do not understand me, Anthony. Pearl, our beautiful Pearl, is a foundling, poor child. She is not a Trevelyan, and Claude is not her brother.' 'Sure an' it can't be possible, Ellen. How did ye hear? There must be some mistake.' 'I met that strange, old woman, ye have heard me tell of, and she said she knew it positively, and could prove it. I tried to get the particulars out of her, but failed intirely. She said I musn't let Missy Pearl know of it for the world.' I heard no more of those bitter, burning words. I must have sunk into a dead faint, for the first I knew Ellen was preparing the table for dinner. I arose and tottered to my room. When I went to dinner they remarked my haggard appearance, little knowing that what they so wished to keep from me had fallen like a death-knell upon my hitherto almost hopeless existence. And now I am going away—I know not whither—somewhere out into the pitiless, stormy world. What matters it? This is not my rightful home—no friends in the world I can rightfully claim. What, indeed, does it matter where *I* go? No one will miss me—no one care for Pearl the foundling, whose birth and parentage are unknown. Oh God! and I have lived all my life on charity—been dependant on those on whom I had no claim—gained an education through such means, and now am still *dependant*. No, no; it can not be so. To all, all—even to thee, at last, dear old cottage—home no longer—farewell! Friends I have loved—friends I can claim, alas! no longer—and every thing my heart holds dear, farewell! Homeless, friendless, cheerless; a lonely orphan, cast upon the cold and heartless world, with none but God. No one shall know of my intentions; but to-morrow, one last, lingering look, then at night I go. I go I know not—care not—where, only that it were possible to sink forever into eternal oblivion. Oh! it is almost beyond human endurance to bear. My brain seems turning wild, and I shall soon be beyond all and everything I have ever known and loved. To some sequestered spot, where there is rest, rest,

oh, God, lead me, that has not the remotest resemblance to what I have ever seen in the past. Farewell! again farewell!"

The next day, taking her sun-hat, she strolled out along the favorite walks and among the loved haunts of her childhood; then stepping into the Sea-shell, drifted slowly across the deep blue waters, until the boat grated upon the pebbly shore, when she looked up to find herself just below the little nook she had not visited for years. At first she sat and gazed upon it like one spell-bound—still, pale, and silent, as though she would imprint upon her very soul each tiny leaflet and scented flower-petal; then, as though the long congealed fountain had broken up its waters, the incubus of grief unbound its iron fetters and she burst into tears. Sobbing, moaning, thinking over again the long-ago and its pleasures, then the long interval of sorrow, and finally her present position, one hour passed into eternity. Not once had she risen from her seat in the Sea-shell, and casting once more a last, lingering look, a bitter sob escaping her as though a human heart were breaking, she turned the boat and rowed quickly back again; then with another burst of bitterest tears she bade the little fairy barque farewell, and walked on to the cottage—home, alas! no more.

Charles was there, and expressing his joy at her return, remarked that even the cottage was lonely without its Pearl. A sigh escaped her, and crossing over she sat down by the window, some impulse causing her to lean out and look far down the broad, dusty road. A carriage was nearing, and the horse seemed coming at its swiftest speed. Just then a white, filmy handkerchief floated from the carriage, before it the spirited animal reared, plunged, then dashed wildly forward, and with foaming mouth rushed past the cottage, overturning the carriage a little beyond, and hurling its inmates mercilessly to the ground. A scream from Pearl brought Charles to the window just in time to see the terrible catastrophe. Hurrying out, to their great astonishment Lottie Stanwick lay still and bleeding before them. They raised her carefully, carried and placed her upon the snowy couch in a small room adjoining the library. Charles immediately started for the doctor, while old Anthony attended

to the wants of the driver, who proved to be partially stunned, a slight gash on his head being the only injury. Among the dark folds of Lottie's hair Pearl discovered quite a deep wound, and her feelings can hardly be described as she gazed upon the pale, blood-stained face of her who, in childhood, had been her dearest friend. She was deeply moved, and resolved that she would remain during her illness, while every thing possible should be done to alleviate her sufferings and save her from death. The doctor soon arrived and was not long in ascertaining that a broken leg and arm was the result of the accident, besides other injuries which careful nursing would alone save from serious consequences; so after performing the operations necessary, and preparing medicine, he gave proper directions and departed.

Days passed away, and yet Lottie Stanwick had scarcely been possessed of reason enough to know where she was and who were her attendants—delirious at times with fever, besides being under the influence of narcotics to soothe her pain.

Mr. and Mrs. Stanwick being absent in Europe at the time, traveling, Pearl, with untiring diligence, watched over her suffering enemy till reason returned to its throne and hope began to dawn of returning health. Her recovery was slow, but sure; and when at last one morning she opened her eyes to her true and humiliating position, a shadow of pain and remorse crossed her emaciated features, while she cast upon Pearl a look which seemed to say, "I have no right to your kindness." The latter soothed her, gently spoke of her parents' absence, their expected return—as a letter had been sent immediately after the accident—adding that much depended on her quietness. She submitted at once like one unable to resist, often closing her eyes as though wishing to escape the glance of her patient nurse; then as she slowly convalesced, watched Pearl's movements with interest as she performed the duties of the sick room; sometimes, Pearl almost fancied, with affection.

One morning Charles sat silently reading, while our little friend was placing a bouquet of sweet flowers where the invalid could gaze upon them, when she heard a low sound. Glancing

up in alarm she found Lottie bathed in tears and sobbing violently.

“What is it, Lottie?” she said, approaching. “It will never do to agitate yourself in this manner.”

“Oh, Pearl dear, my early friend, do not restrain me, or I shall go mad. I must speak, for I can endure your kindness no longer. I know it will be a relief, and I believe will hasten rather than retard my recovery. I have a confession to make, though I fear it is too late to recall your lost happiness; for it was I—proud, heartless and selfish that I was—who struck the death-blow to all your hopes. It was I who stained your beautiful painting with the ink; it was I who took from Genevieve’s dressing table her bracelet, and with a key of my own unlocked your trunk and placed it within, to injure your hitherto unsullied reputation in the eyes of the Trevelyan family, as well as those of Paul Marshall. He was rich, Pearl. I strove to win him for his gold, and finding that while you, in all your beauty and perfection of character, stood in my way, it was impossible, I determined to stoop to the most degrading stratagems, if necessary, to attain my ends. I knew you would write to him and he would believe you, so watching my opportunity I bribed the post-boy, intercepted your letter and wrote another, cruel and heartless—you recollect our handwriting was nearly alike in school-days—stating that you did not love him; was glad you had found out your mistake ere you were bound by the ties of marriage; that you were surely not fitted for each other; that you presumed he had concluded ere this, as you had, that it was nothing but child’s play after all; that there was no need of a reply, as nothing would change your purpose. After my return home I visited at Dr. Norton’s as soon as possible, and while there told him of the theft. He said that nothing but your own confession of guilt would make him believe it. Finding this fail, I told a cruel lie, that I had overheard you say to Lulu one day that all that induced you to form the engagement at all was because of his riches—that you had concluded there were others just as wealthy you could like better, and were going to write and break it off. As this fully agreed with the letter he had re-

ceived he believed my story, and turning pale as death, snatched his hat and rushed wildly out. I used my utmost endeavors to win him, but to my surprise and vexation all proved in vain, and he left for Europe a changed man, even before my departure for home. I do not blame you if you hate me. I wish you would. I could endure it better. Your kindness is killing me. All this long time I have shunned you, so we have scarcely met face to face, though dwelling so near together. Do you wonder? I will not ask you to forgive me. I do not merit your pardon—only treat me with that scorn which I deserve.”

Charles had drawn near and heard all. His brow darkened with passion as she went on, while he seemed hardly able to control himself; and, as though fearful of being overcome, went quickly out, leaving the two girls alone. Pearl had listened silently, pale and anxious, and now with a deep groan she sank upon the carpet overpowered by the intensity of her emotions. She hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry—certainly she knew now that Paul Marshall had been true to her, which brought that unspeakable joy she had not known for years; but think of his opinion of herself since the receipt of that wicked letter. What must have been his feelings when he thought that she, in whom he had placed such perfect confidence, had turned so heartlessly against him?—when he saw every fond hope decay—every bright dream he had cherished of the future broken, and the golden web of love torn mercilessly by the fingers of her he had chosen for his bride? His fate was even worse than her own, if possible, for

“Sad it may be to be longing, with a patience faint and weary,
For a hope deferred; and sadder still to see it fade and fall;
Yet to grasp the thing we long for and with sorrow sick and dreary,
Then to find how it can fail us, is the saddest pain of all.”

The sick girl was still sobbing pitifully, and Pearl, forgetful as she ever was of her own sufferings when listening to those of another—forgetful of the injuries done her, whose bitter effects she felt to-day still worse, if possible, when she saw how easily it might all have been avoided but for the selfish interest of one single individual, arose, and twining her arms around Lottie's neck, said:

"Do not weep, dear Lottie, you did not know—you did not realize what you were doing. Tears will not take it back. I forgive you freely."

"Oh, I do not deserve it," she sobbed out. "You are too kind—too kind. I can never forgive myself, never. Oh! if I only knew where Paul Marshall is to-day, this wrong should be expiated if I had to cross the water myself to do it. Oh! oh! I pray God the lost sunshine of your life may be again restored."

If it were possible, thought Pearl, would he return to marry a foundling, one whose birth and parentage are unknown; a penniless, friendless orphan? No, no; it is too late now. It would be too much to ask or to hope for; and when Lottie's mother returned to take her place by the sick bed, which nothing else could induce her to leave, she would seek other scenes, where God alone knew what would be her fate.

CHAPTER IX.

"O my soul's joy!
If after every Tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have wakened death!"
* * * * *

If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another Comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate." —*Shakespeare.*

A delightful shower had refreshed the earth, and now the clouds were scattered, leaving blue and gold, interspersed with scarlet, spread out like a beautiful painting and casting a gorgeous halo over all. Claude had returned from a walk in the country just in time to escape the great pattering drops, and now as it cleared away, leaving so much of rare beauty, he put on his hat and sauntered forth to admire the unusual loveliness and inhale the invigorating atmosphere. He very seldom enjoyed such privileges, as business calls were so frequent. To-

day he hardly knew which way to direct his footsteps; but just then the shrill whistle of the afternoon express rent the air, and something unseen seemed to draw him toward the depot. He had been there but seldom, and it did afford a slight recreation to watch the many forms and faces differing so materially, and perhaps there might be one among the number he would recognize.

As the passengers descended, two of the number particularly arrested Claude's attention—the one, a respectably-dressed, middle-aged gentleman, with an extremely sad countenance, the other, a woman, dressed in deep mourning, with a strange, hurried manner, and her eyes, which glittered like steel through the thick folds of her veil, were fastened with a wild, frightened expression on this same gentleman. Her desire seemed to be to escape observation, and hastily entering a cab, whose doors closed instantly upon her, she was seen no more.

Her manner impressed Claude strangely, but there seemed something familiar about the gentleman. He seemed undecided where to go, looking around in a bewildered manner, but seeing the eyes of the young physician fastened upon him, approached and inquired:

“Will you be so kind as to inform me whether Dr. Norton still resides in this place?”

“I am most happy to inform you that he does, and, as his house happens to be my home at present, I will gladly escort you thither,” replied Claude.

“Thanks,” said the gentleman, his face brightening a little as he spoke, “I should like to meet my good friend once more;” and turning, walked silently and with an air of dejection by the side of Claude, who, in the meantime, was greatly puzzled to think where he had before seen some one similar, and was the first to break the silence:

“You have traveled far, I presume, and are extremely weary?”

“I have, indeed; but am agreeably surprised to find Dr. Norton still a resident of the city. Perhaps you have been an inmate of the family long enough to have known my daughter Grace, before her decease?”

Claude looked up astonished, hardly knowing what to make of his strange words.

"Your daughter Grace! Miss Nellisse, do you mean?"

"I do most assuredly," said the gentleman, his face lighting up with animation at the mere mention of her name.

"Did I understand you to say before her *decease*, sir?" queried Claude, hardly believing he had heard aright.

"Yes; I did say before her *decease*," answered the gentleman sadly.

This, then, was her long-lost father, and he replied quickly: "You are mistaken. She is not dead, but alive now and still at Dr. Norton's."

Such a strange, sudden transformation our young friend had never seen upon the countenance of any human being. At first he stopped short, looked upon Claude in blank amazement; the rigid lines which sorrow and despair had drawn upon his brow seemed to relax, then turning pale as death he grasped the paling for support: "Not dead—not dead? You say *my child not dead?* Do I hear aright? Is my child still alive? Are you sure it is my own Grace?" and the strong man, covering his face with his hands, wept for very joy, while his frame shook with emotion.

"Yes, yes, sir," replied Claude, "there is no mistake."

"Oh, this is too great happiness—more than I could ask. Thank God—thank God! But am I not dreaming?"

"No, sir; no. It is all a blessed reality. While she will be no less surprised and overjoyed to find that her long-lost father is still alive."

"There is some great mystery about this. A low grave was all I expected to see of my darling child; and now, oh, joy unspeakable! she is still alive."

They had reached the gateway, when suddenly from among the flowers, like a beautiful houri, her golden hair straying over her azure robe like rays of sunlight over a summer sky, Grace bounded out into the path, confronting Claude and laughing gleefully; but at the sight of a stranger a blush of mortification

mantled her cheek, and stepping back among the flowery billows of white and scarlet, said:

“Excuse me, Claude, but I heard your footstep, and supposing you were alone, thought to startle you;” but the tall stranger had paused and was gazing at her now with a peculiar scrutiny. She glanced again. What was there in that face that startled her? Something so strangely familiar. Why did memory at that moment carry her back to that morning when she waved a last adieu to her much-loved father? But with this transient thought came the blessed truth that the same form, though with a face strangely altered and grief-stricken, stood before her now: “Thank God! It is my dear, dear father,” she cried, and, stepping forward she was clasped firmly within his arms, and overcome by excess of joy, her lovely head drooped, her waxen eye-lids closed—she had fainted. He carried her in, preceded by Claude, and laid his treasure upon the couch in the library. Then while the young doctor applied restoratives, sat silently gazing upon her with the love and admiration of a fond parent, while tears of joy chased each other over his face.

She soon returned to consciousness, and the Doctor and his wife coming in a few moments after, found the trio contentedly engaged in conversation, Mr. Nellisse just on the point of narrating the reason of his silence.

Claude had slyly sent word in to Dr. Norton by a servant just then passing through the hall, that a stranger was present in the library wishing to see himself and wife. They came immediately, though hardly expecting to see so familiar a face, though he was straightway recognized by both:

“Well, I declare, if this isn’t an unexpected and happy surprise,” said the Doctor, shaking his hand.

“This is really more than we dared hope for,” responded his wife, the glad tears shining in her eyes.

“And I, in return, am no less happily surprised than yourselves, for I supposed my darling child laid beside the others in the church-yard, while your own dear faces I supposed in some foreign land.”

“And now, before we go any farther,” said the Doctor, “let

us sit down and learn why you have maintained this mysterious silence."

"For a time," began Mr. Nellisse, "letters from here came regularly. Then quite an interim elapsed in which I received none. The next was in mourning, and, breaking the seal with extreme dread, I found a letter I supposed written by yourself, Doctor, stating that a malignant disease had very suddenly carried my daughter into eternity; that it was impossible for me to reach there, even had you apprehended danger from the first; and that every possible attention had been paid both before and after her decease. The letter expressed much real sorrow, and concluded by saying that an answer would be useless, as you had disposed of your town residence, and, with your family, intended to travel for a time, at least, and that you would write again informing me of your whereabouts. A postscript added that the remainder of her property would be refunded to me. I waited long and anxiously for tidings, but in vain. My every hope was gone. I felt that I had nothing indeed to live for. Sometimes I almost murmured that all I loved should have been taken from me. I shrank from visiting these scenes again, until a few weeks ago, when a strange longing took possession of me to once more behold the graves of my loved ones. So coming hither something prompted me to inquire for you, though at the time I thought it almost useless; but from the first I find I have been directed by the hand of a Divine Providence to this home-land, where I find again the glorious sunshine of a daughter's love to illumine the last days of my existence."

"A strange, strange mystery," uttered Dr. Norton. "I know nothing about such a letter. I have resided here during your absence, and answered every epistle received from you, until at last they ceased altogether. For a long time we entertained hope of tidings, but receiving none naturally supposed you dead. Little Grace, here, has mourned you as such, passing many a sad and lonely hour."

"Yes, dear father. What I had ceased to hope for, the vacant place in my heart, the desolate spot in my life, is again filled by

your loving presence. But who of us possesses an enemy that would commit so foul a deed, for it certainly has been an injury to us all."

"I can not conjecture," said Mr. Nellisse and the Doctor in concert. "But let our happiness not be marred by this mystery, at least during the present," continued the former. "I feel that we should only be too thankful that even at this late hour we have met."

All responded in the affirmative, while each face was lit up with a new happiness, excepting Claude's, which had a sad and dejected look. He hardly knew, at this moment, whether to be glad or sorry. There seemed to be a commingling of both. The former he certainly was on account of the happiness of Grace, yet he could not help thinking of his own future and its cheerless aspect, when all he loved, on which he had a claim, would be torn from him; for the crisis had come at last, when Pearl's identity must be proven if possible. He shrank from the task before him, yet resolved to march boldly, bravely forth to the call of duty. Just at this point of his thoughts tea was announced, after which an hour or two passed in pleasant converse, when Mr. Nellisse, being greatly fatigued, retired, soon followed by the others.

The next morning before dawn found the young Doctor on his way to Moss Cottage. Dr. Norton had very kindly consented to attend to Claude's various patients during the day, which he was to spend at home, returning in the evening with the little rose-wood box containing the golden chain and cross, besides the fleecy garments marked with the name "Pearl." As he entered Moss Glen, a slight mist, rising from the lake, tinged with the glory of the eastern sun, hung like a veil of burnished gold over its glassy surface, seeming to vie with the shining crown cast over the tops of the forest trees, while through the foliage of the giant maples gleamed the pure white cottage he was yet proud to call by that sweet name—home. "When its gentle mistress was gone, what would it be then?" he sighed.

But who was that before him now? for a slight form, in a neat pink morning dress, with a pale, care-worn face, stood mid-

way down the avenue, tearing some myrtle sprays from their bed of green and twining them carelessly among the flowers of a lovely bouquet which she held in one thin, white hand. Could it be Pearl? No, no. The eyes looked too wild and sunken; the features too pale and emaciated; yet it must be, for as her eyes fell upon him the flowers fell listlessly down on the waxen-leaved mound, while with a cry of joy she came bounding to meet him. Then, as though restrained by some sudden impulse, her speed slackened, the glad light faded from the violet eyes, leaving a sad, disappointed expression, while she held out her hand with an air of coldness and constraint never shown towards him before.

"But what does such distant courtesy mean towards your loving brother?" he said, almost faltering at the last word.

"Oh, do not ask me," she responded, bursting into tears. "I am hardly myself at all any more; but your presence, perhaps, will cheer and strengthen me."

"You look so careworn, Pearl, dear, as though you had lately passed through much fatigue."

"As I have, dear Claude. Perhaps you will censure me, but it is too late to withhold it longer;" and in a few words the whole story was related of Lottie Stanwick's accident, illness and confession.

"I am so thankful your innocence is proven, which God has brought around in His own good time. This ought to bring back the roses to your cheeks. Besides, Paul is the same true and noble fellow I ever thought him to be. That I only knew his whereabouts! But cheer up. That will come all right, too, some day. Why did you not write of this charge you had on you?"

"I knew you would consider it too much for my strength."

"You thought rightly; and though I am exceedingly sorry you should so far overtax yourself, yet I can not but commend your noble self-denial, as well as the forgiving spirit you have manifested towards your deadliest enemy. You must have rest, however, which, we hope, with a little medicinal aid, will give you health and strength."

Pearl sighed as she thought how comparatively useless it would prove while the canker of sorrow was still corroding her very life.

"What a beautiful horse," she said, affectionately caressing the noble animal, a great pet and favorite of the Doctor's; "but we are forgetting ourselves, and Lottie will think herself neglected. Anthony is coming, and he will relieve you of all care. Come with me, then."

"Well, sure, an' it's yerself I see before me, so early in the mornin'. Right glad, my boy, right glad," said the old gardener, as he advanced. "Ye're well, I hope?"

"Yes, usually so, good old friend," returned Claude; "and I hope to find your kind-hearted wife looking as rugged as yourself."

"Yes, yes, indade, she's as hearty as ye ever saw her. Let me put your horse in the stable," he said, leading it in that direction, while Claude and Pearl entered the house, where they were met by Ellen, who greeted "Masther Claude" with that frank and generous manner which characterized her; then opening the door they passed silently into the sick room where Lottie, reclining among the snowy pillows, had changed so much with suffering as hardly to be recognized by Claude. As her eyes fell upon him a flush of scarlet suddenly suffused the lily of her cheeks, then receding, left them paler than before. Holding out her hand to Claude, she murmured something scarcely audible, then turning on her pillow burst into tears. The memory of childhood's days; her cruel neglect of these, her truest friends; the great injuries done Pearl; her kindness, and the pitying, forgiving expression of Claude as he entered her sick room—he from whom she merited only scorn—in her weak state so overcome her that she found herself unable to control her emotion.

Claude felt for her what he had once thought impossible—a strange pity; and while he took the wasted hand in his own, whispered, "We are still your friends, Lottie. 'Let the dead past bury its dead.'"

His words seemed to have a magical effect, for a smile of

gratitude lit up every feature, while she said: "I could hardly expect it." Then admiring the flowers and inhaling their fragrance, expressed thanks for the kind consideration of Pearl.

The greater part of the day was spent within the sick room, though a short walk was indulged in after dinner, and a little confidential talk in the library, yet neither mentioned that which was most predominant in their thoughts—the bitter knowledge that they could no longer rightfully claim the relationship of brother and sister. A perceptible sadness had stolen over both, and though neither could account for it in the other, strange to say it originated from the same cause. So that night they parted; Pearl with a great misery at her heart, bidding him good-bye, with little hope of ever seeing him again, while he expected to meet her under entirely different circumstances, which might render her more happy and content though unhappy himself.

A little packet containing the rose-wood box went with him on his return, and when he found sufficient leisure, which did not occur for two or three days subsequent, he called Mr. Nellisse aside and tremblingly narrated what his father had told him. Then opening the box he raised the gleaming chain and cross, and unfolding the filmy robe of India muslin held it up to the gentleman's astonished gaze, when Mr. Nellisse exclaimed:

"The same, the same—the mate to Grace's cross, and the identical robe. I remember the respective days I purchased them, as though they were but yesterday. And Pearl was the name we gave her. Everything, the number of years and all, exactly correspond; and yet can it be possible that I am to receive this double blessing of finding my lost and loved child? Oh, God, what have I done to merit this great happiness! I thank Thee!" and great tears of gratitude rolled down his furrowed cheeks. "And I owe so much to you, my kind young friend," he continued, taking Claude's hand and pressing it warmly. "And remember, any favor you may ask of me, if in my power, it shall be granted."

"Thanks, kind sir," said Claude, tearfully. "I will not say it has not cost me a struggle and a sacrifice, but the call of duty I

must obey, and I feel that I am amply rewarded by the happiness it has already occasioned you. Grace does not—”

But they were interrupted by the opening of the door. “A message, Doctor,” said the servant, handing him a small paper, which, after opening and glancing hastily over, he read aloud:

“DR. CLAUDE TREVELYAN:

“Come quickly with the messenger. Mother is dying and wishes to see you and Mr. James Nellisse.

“NIGHT, OF THE HAUNTED HOUSE.”

“Strange,” they exclaimed in concert. “What can it mean? But there is certainly no time to be lost,” said Claude, “if we are going.”

“We will go,” said Mr. Nellisse, answering Claude’s questioning look. “Surely no harm can result from it.”

During the bustle of preparation, Claude did not think at once of Pearl’s adventure at the haunted house, but had no sooner got on his way than word after word of her story slowly came to his mind. Perhaps this strange summons might be connected in some manner with Pearl, and furnish some clue to the mystery; and after telling the whole to his companion, Mr. Nellisse, the latter ejaculated:

“Still more and more mysteries! I cannot conjecture who this woman is. And she seems to know me as well. But let us hurry on and relieve our minds of this perplexity, if possible.”

They were nearing the haunted house now, and driving up the tangled, weedy path, alighted, and following a young girl who met them at the door through numberless lofty rooms, dank and mouldy, empty and ghost-like, to the old west wing, entered a room dark and weird, like the others, with but few articles of furniture, while the dim light revealed a low couch on which lay the form of a woman, by whose side sat a girl weeping passionately. The former beckoned to them with her hand, saying as she did so:

“Be quick! I have something I would say, for I have not long to live.”

As they drew nearer a gleam of recognition passed over the face of Mr. Nellisse, confirmed by the woman’s next words:

"You doubtless recognize the face of your former house-keeper, Hortense Burns, now Hortense Ravenna?"

"I do," replied Mr. Nellisse.

"You lost a child after my dismissal?"

"We did."

"You know for many years I had been the only mistress of your stately home. I loved it, while its master, yourself, sir, was dearer than life itself to me. You may wonder, for you did naught to win my love; but to me it grew to be a second nature. I did not expect to become your wife. I dared hope for no such thing; but if I could only live on and on, superintending your home, I would be fully content, for then I was much in your presence; and when you unexpectedly brought home a wife, my heart was stirred to its very depths with hatred towards her, while in every way I sought to torment the poor creature, until she could endure it no longer. One night as I was crossing the hall I heard her speak my name. I stole on tip-toe to listen, while she said that she had hitherto made no complaint, hoping there might be a change, but such a life was unendurable, and that either she or I must leave. I listened eagerly, hoping you might side with me; but no, you expressed great sympathy for her, and the next morning gave me my final discharge. For a very long time I remained where every movement of yourself and family was made known to me; and after hearing of the birth of your second child, concluded that my revenge should be effected by stealing your idolized babe. Accordingly, watching my opportunity, and seeing the happy mother leave it for a few moments within the pavilion, I silently stole in, and taking the tiny form in my arms fled swift as an arrow out of the enclosure, and hurrying from the main road to an untraveled highway, entered a cab in waiting and was whirled far away. I sailed for America, and something led me to the village where Dr. Trevelyan resided—this young man's father, and after a few week's board at a house situated back in the mountains, occupied by a lonely old woman, I learned that an infant daughter of the Doctor's, but a few days old, had died, and tiring of my little charge, I concluded they would naturally

take pity on its helplessness, and I left it one morning at the door. The babe wore a tiny golden cross, and a robe of India muslin marked with the name 'Pearl.' A short time after this I was married. We took up our abode in this haunted house, when a daughter was given us, after which my husband died, leaving me in loneliness with a small property. I kept strict watch of the child. Often heard of its welfare, and then, as fate would have it, the family, after the death of the Doctor's wife, came to Moss Cottage, not far from here, making it their home. This circumstance permitted me to keep an eye over her. I met the old gardener's wife twice in the berry field. First puzzling her by my strange words, then enjoining her to secrecy, I told her that Pearl was not Claude's sister, as he supposed, still leaving her in doubt and mystery. And once—I never can forget it—during a terrific thunder storm, which caused them to seek my roof for shelter, Pearl Trevelyan and a friend entered these dingy doors. I was affected strangely, her features being so much like your own as to awaken memories bringing you before me, until I feared I should go mad, thinking of the dreadful sin I had committed which had caused so much real and needless sorrow. I knew your sweet wife was dead, and cursed myself, feeling the sin of murder as strongly on my conscience as though I had drawn a knife and let out her heart's blood.

"I often visited the city where Dr. Norton resided, knowing it was the home of your other idolized daughter. Fearing that as they grew up the two girls would meet, and by that means my guilt be found out; besides, fearing your return from India, I resolved, if in my power, to intercept letters sent to yourself as well as yours to them, which I did by bribing the post-boy with a considerable sum of money. In this way I learned to imitate the writing of Dr. Norton, and wrote that cruel lie of your daughter's death, which you doubtless received, and which caused you to remain absent so long.

"One day while in the city staying at a friend's house, I visited the park and met the two girls arm in arm. 'Together at last,' I murmured, while their great family resemblance to each other caused me still greater uneasiness than before. I had no peace

day nor night. You doubtless noticed a woman in black in the same car with yourself when you came to the city a few days ago, which was myself, but fearing to attract your attention I kept closely veiled, and entering a hack left your presence immediately. In this way I happened to know of your arrival, which I am thankful for, as I could not die with this sin upon my conscience. Your portrait on the wall there, covered by that veil of silk, is one which an artist copied from a small picture of yourself given me years before I left your house.

"I wanted the young gentleman"—pointing to Claude—"that he might witness my confession and know that Pearl Trevelyan is not his sister, but the daughter of Mr. James Nellisse."

The young Doctor bowed assent, while she continued:

"It is too much to ask you to pardon, Mr. Nellisse, but my soul is somewhat relieved of its burden, and now you know that which has been wearing out my life for years."

They had heard her through, while each seemed too utterly confounded to speak; and the dying woman, waving her hand towards the door as though wishing them to retire, turned to her daughter, and while she was speaking her last words they walked silently out of the room, leaving the two in their would-be solitude, and hurriedly sought the open air.

They concluded, after a few moments' consultation, to go by the way of Moss Cottage, and after disclosing the secret to Pearl, they in company, would seek Dr. Norton's, where a blessed reunion of three happy, loving hearts would take place. But on reaching Moss Cottage they were doomed to disappointment, for Pearl was not there. She had gone down to Clara Lawson's, they supposed. Mrs. Stanwick had arrived to attend Lottie, who was rapidly improving, and this was the first of Pearl's going out. So leaving Mr. Nellisse to be entertained by the good old gardener and his wife, Claude drove speedily to Mr. Lawson's. Not there, they said, but Mrs. Lawson had seen her pass along quite early in the morning. Clara was absent at a friend's. What could it mean? There must be something wrong, thought Claude, and starting his horse he hurried along the dusty road, on and on, scarcely realizing what he was doing,

only intent upon finding her to impart the tidings of her new relationship.

It was moonlight now, and he was traveling on a lonely road, when beneath a projecting rock on the side of a hill, a short distance from the road, he espied something white gleaming in the moon's rays. Stopping his horse and alighting, he cleared the rickety fence at a bound, and approaching the object found it to be the figure of a female, a white shawl thrown over her shoulders as a sort of protection. She was sleeping quietly, long golden curls, damp with the night dew, veiling her swan-like throat, while one white arm was thrown carelessly upward partially concealing her features. He removed it gently, his heart beating strangely, and there, in sweet repose, lay bonnie Pearl, where, weary and jaded out with her long walk, she had lain down to rest.

"What means this strange conduct, poor child," he murmured, and kneeling by her side aroused her from sleep.

"Where am I?" she asked, while the large violet eyes unclosed and stared wildly around. "Oh, I thought I was at home. But no, I remember now, there's no such word for me. And you—how came you here? Why did you seek me? You are not my brother!"

"But how do you know this?" he inquired, beginning to suspect that Ellen had revealed to her Hortense Ravenna's secret; and sitting there, the moonlight wrapping them round like a shroud, she told him how she came by the knowledge.

"But where were you going?"

"Oh, any where, any where; and you must not hinder me. I am going, Claude, and all the powers of earth shall not stop me. You have no right—let me go," she said wildly, starting up.

"But hush, Pearl, I have good news for you."

"Good news for me! No, no. It can not be. No good news for me in this world. It is too late, too late. I know what I am—a foundling, Claude. There is no more hope of any thing, except death, in my heart—let me go!"

"Pearl, dear, you are demented. Listen to me. Mr. Nellisse, the father of Grace, who has just returned from the Indies, has

proved you his lost child, stolen during infancy by that strange, weird woman at the haunted house."

"This explains her strange words and manner," said Pearl, the light of joy taking the place of the shadow of despair in her eyes.

"Yes," replied Claude, "and now you must return with me to the open arms of a father, dear Pearl, who is now waiting to receive you at Moss Cottage."

"And Grace? Grace is my sister?"

"Yes; and now let us hasten, for they will really become alarmed at my long absence;" and suiting the action to the word they walked down the rough path, entered the carriage and were soon on the way to Moss Cottage, during which time Claude related the whole story, the revelation of his father as well as that of Hortense Ravenna, and why he had kept it a secret from her, but was now glad, as it had brought her so much happiness in the midst of dark despair.

She wept and laughed by turns, hardly knowing which to do in her wild joy that she had been rescued from the fate of a lonely, uncared-for wanderer on the earth; and Claude indeed rejoiced when he witnessed the happiness of the two as they met shortly after on the threshold, embracing with the true fervor of father and child. Thus does the blessed assurance that we are making others happy bring that peace and joy to ourselves which is true and lasting.

The eyes of Mr. Nellisse were riveted on Pearl almost constantly during the time that passed before retiring, and as he remarked, almost feared she would vanish, leaving only a beautiful dream. Her likeness to Grace was plain to be seen, though the face of his lost wife was pictured more plainly in the fine contour of Pearl's features, and in the expression of her dark violet eyes. Much of the time she sat silent, for this strange, unexpected happiness coming in the darkest hour of her life, was too deep for words; while Anthony and Ellen could hardly believe their own senses, to think Missy Pearl had really found her father, while that sweet young Miss Nellisse was her own sister. It was almost incredible.

Mrs. Stanwick and Lottie, who in the morning, were apprised of the occurrence, could hardly realize that the wealthy Mr. Nellisse, the father of Grace, was the father of Pearl also; but Lottie was sincerely glad of her good fortune, while Mrs. Stanwick, who really appreciated the kindness shown by Pearl towards her daughter, heartily congratulated her, wishing them all many years of future happiness. At an early hour the two reached the house of Dr. Norton, when Grace, with a smiling face, came out to receive them. "Oh, papa, your prolonged absence startled me. I was told that you and Doctor Claude had gone out on a strange errand, but could learn no further particulars. But who have we here?"—as Pearl raised her veil—"My dear friend, Pearl Trevelyan, and changed so much that I scarcely knew you." "My little girl is mistaken," said Mr. Nellisse, as they all sauntered into the house together. "Pearl Trevelyan no longer, but Pearl Nellisse, your only sister, and my long lost daughter." A slight scream echoed through the hall, and throwing their arms around each other the two girls wept for joy, while the father looked on with unspeakable gratitude burning in his heart, meanwhile mingling his tears with theirs, and Claude, standing by, was happy in witnessing the excessive joy of this family reunited. Then all seeking the library where Dr. Norton and his wife were seated, Pearl being introduced in her new character, as Mr. Nellisse's daughter, all were impatient to hear the mystery explained. Mr. Nellisse related all, not omitting one particular.

"A jubilee on that," exclaimed Dr. Norton, as he concluded. "Invitations shall be given out for the grandest entertainment ever held in this city. What do you say to that, wife?"

"I am perfectly agreeable and pleased to do so," echoed the lady, smiling.

"Capital! capital!" they exclaimed in concert, all highly elated with the prospect, except Pearl. A shadow of pain crossed her brow at the mere mention of it, for, as might be supposed, this house and its surroundings had again awakened memories of him she would fain forget. This alone was an impediment to her happiness—Paul Marshall's absence. No one knew of

his whereabouts; and now the question was, would he ever return again. Perhaps ere this he might be dead, or if alive, might never visit these scenes again, and without his priceless love, her bliss would be ever incomplete.

Thus two weeks wore away, which was spent as a general merry-making among the little company, visiting friends, driving, walking, reading and conversing, in which all joined but Claude, who was seldom at leisure, owing to the duties of his profession. Invitations had been sent out, and the grandest party of the season was soon to come off. The night proved one of rare beauty, for the moon bathed all nature in a veil of mystic silver; little breezes sighed and whispered among the flowers, wafting their perfume to the guests within, where beauty and fashion prevailed, heightened by the bewildering spell which music cast over all as it pulsed softly forth on the perfumed air. Grace looked lovely in a dress of white over blue, her golden hair looped with pearls; but our little heroine, in a dress of spotless muslin, with no ornament save a knot of waxen fuchsias at her throat, and drooping among the folds of her hair, attracted every one present by her modest, unassuming attire, as well as her sweet, gentle demeanor. It was getting late, the refreshments had been served, and a few of the older ones had returned to their homes. Pearl was growing weary of the gayety, and longed for a little quiet, so throwing a scarf over her shoulders she stole out among the shadows in the garden to dream. Such gay scenes always brought Paul Marshall more vividly to her mind. The crowd of bright and smiling faces, of hearts so free from care and sorrow, so different from her own, made her long yet more for the perfect bliss they seemed to enjoy; but there was a vacancy, a desolate spot in her heart, and only Paul Marshall—noble, handsome Paul Marshall, could ever supply that place. She was thinking of that day, so long, long ago, when he sought her in the picture gallery, and of the earnestness of his beautiful eyes when he spoke those bewildering words of love. But it was all useless, this dreaming. Why did she indulge in it?

Just then the shrill whistle of the night train rent the still

air, bringing her back to the reality of the present. She heard them, one by one, departing; still she could not rise to go in. Something seemed to chain her to the spot. She fell into dreaming again, when a step, short and quick, arrested her attention. and looking up she saw a tall and well-formed gentleman enter the house. An unusual tumult ensued, and while she wondered what stranger had arrived at that late hour, a strange thrill passed through her frame, while she seemed unable to rise from her seat. She leaned forward, gathered a sprig of southern-wood, carelessly pulling it to pieces and scattering it on the ground at her feet, when a step sounded again, and a manly form stood beside her.

“Pearl! Pearl! can this be my darling Pearl?”

Ah! that voice—an echo from the past—she could not mistake, and with a glad cry she was clasped in the arms of Paul Marshall.

“Returned at last, only to find you my love, and make you still my own.”

“But you thought me untrue,” she faltered.

“Yes, God forgive me, I did, though every evil influence worked together to make me believe so. A letter from Charles, stating the confession of that wicked girl, Lottie Stanwick, has brought me to your side. When I left here heart-broken, believing you untrue, I was hardly able to withstand seeking your presence, but my pride alone kept me from so doing. I visited L—— where I hoped to see Charles that I might learn more about it, and perhaps be reconciled. He was not there, as you know, so I embarked for Europe on the next steamer, and wandered away over the world, wandered I cared not whither, continually roving, fearing to settle at any place lest solitude should bring madness, the vision of a little golden-haired fairy always floating before me, which, though I supposed false, I worshiped wildly, worshiped until I could endure life no longer without at least hearing whether you were still alive. So believing it the surest way of hearing the truth, I wrote to Charles, but a few weeks ago, of my whereabouts, thank God! and soon received an answer which brought me new life and a determi-

nation to come and claim my lost Pearl. I seemed like one awakened from the dead, and how often I wished for wings, for the journey seemed so long; but I am here, here by your side, my darling, at last, where for the first time in years Paul Marshall finds peace and rest. Oh, oh! the bliss of Heaven cannot be greater than this!" and tears of joy fell like drops of dew from his eyes down among her golden curls upon his breast, while she wept that night her happiest tears.

"I did not expect to find you here, but intended visiting Moss Cottage in the early morn. Grace, in a few words, told me of her father's return, of your new relationship to them, for which I am truly thankful, and hope to hear the particulars at no distant day. She told me, too, you were out here among the flowers, and offered to go and bring you to me, but I preferred seeking sweet Pearl myself, where no other eye but God's would behold our bliss, for the influence which has ever been around me since my day at Moss Cottage, and the affliction I have passed through, has taught me to trust in a stronger arm than my own, my darling, one on which we will lean while together traveling the rosy path of life."

"My heart goes out in inexpressible gratitude to God for all this great bliss," said Pearl, and then in turn she told him of her own trials during his absence, while he wept again and again in sympathy, vowing that nothing should part them again. He would rather die then and there, at her feet, but their trust should be in God; He would be merciful ever.

So we will leave them in their happiness, and once more return to Claude, who was in his room, restlessly walking to and fro. He was thinking of Grace. He could endure this suspense no longer—he must speak. He was meeting with great success in practice. Besides, in many ways, she had plainly expressed her regards for him, while he had not forgotten that her father had said he would grant him any favor in his power. He had restored to him one daughter, and had he not the right to claim the other? He was almost certain of his consent. So stepping out into the hall, and seeking the window, where the moonlight fell in a broad, pale sheet, he saw the last guest depart,

and stood awaiting Grace Nellisse. She soon came tripping along, and seeing his form near the window, almost shrieked:

“Oh, you naughty boy, to frighten me so,” she exclaimed, pausing by his side, and glancing out upon the stars and round moon.

“It was not my intention, I assure you, but I have something I would say. You may think I am presuming too much, dear Grace, but I must know my fate to-night. Grace! Grace! my darling, I love you; can you, do you love me well enough to be my wife? There are others, I know, far worthier, others who are——”

“Stop! stop Claude, you are worthy; yes, yes, far too noble and good for a poor, little silly thing like me, and I love you—love you, yes, well enough to be your wife,” she responded, her fair head drooping, while Claude thought he saw a diamond tear fall among the filmy folds of white enveloping her, and, for the first time, clasping her in his arms, he exclaimed:

“Thank God for this unexpected, undeserved happiness, this great gift of your love.”

The consent of the father was readily granted to the young pair the succeeding day, the happiness of a parent’s blessing adding to their own great joy in each others love.

Pearl was made happier, if possible, in the receipt of a letter from the Trevelyans, in which, from each member of the family, her pardon was sincerely solicited for accusing her wrongfully. She immediately replied that all should be forgiven and forgotten; also sending an invitation to the wedding of Claude and Grace, herself and——, who they might guess, adding that Charles had better avail himself of the opportunity, and celebrate his nuptials at the same time.

Accordingly, on the appointed day, the Trevelyans arrived, accompanied by Clara, Charles playfully saying as they entered:

“You see I fully agreed with you, Pearl. I suppose it will be none the less joyful to celebrate three weddings than two?”

“No, no,” all echoed in concert, and Anthony and Ellen, who, accepting the invitation of Pearl, came up a few moments after

with old Dobbin, thought they had never seen so many bright and happy faces together since their own joyful marriage-day.

A stately mansion, which rears itself almost above the trees in Moss Glen, is the home of Paul Marshall and his bonnie bride, Pearl; while Claude and Grace have an elegant town residence, near the home of Dr. Norton. Mr. Nellisse has returned from the Indies, where he repaired in order to entirely close up his business, and now spends his time alternately with his two loved and loving daughters. Charles and Clara have a home-nest close by the Marshall mansion. Anthony and Ellen still occupy Moss Cottage.

THE END.

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